



# GIANNELLA

MRS.  
HUGH FRASER





Class PZ 3

Book F864 G2

Copyright N<sup>o</sup>                     

**COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.**











GIANNELLA

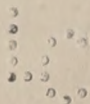
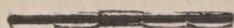






# GIANNELLA

BY  
MRS. HUGH FRASER

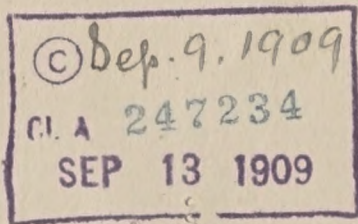


ST. LOUIS, MO., 1909  
PUBLISHED BY B. HERDER  
17 SOUTH BROADWAY



PZ3  
F864 Gi

Copyright, 1909  
by  
MRS. HUGH FRASER



— BECKTOLD —  
PRINTING AND BOOK MFG. CO.  
ST. LOUIS, MO.



# GIANNELLA

## CHAPTER I

“**A**ND now, what are we to do about the child? Cannot you think of something, Carl?”

Carl stooped down to disentangle some very small fingers which had been busy with his bootlaces, and as the baby crawled away to find fresh mischief he straightened himself and watched her with a ruefully puzzled expression.

“Upon my word, Hans,” he said at last, “I can think of nothing but the Pietá. It seems hard, but all the boys are as poor as ourselves. The only married one is Sigersen, and his wife is away — and not much good when she is at home. The Vice-consul said we had better put the child in the Rota — and I am afraid that is what we shall have to do. The nuns will keep any name and address they find pinned on her clothes, and if things go better with us, or if it should turn out that poor Brockmann had any relations, and they ever inquire for her, we shall know where to look for her.”

The speakers were two Scandinavian painters, young and kind and poor, members of the little brotherhood which, year in, year out, finds its way from the shores of the bleak North Sea to the blue and



gold of the Mediterranean, to the marbles and the illexes, to the campagna and the hills; and have taken root in the classic, teeming soil which is Rome. A friend and comrade, Niels Brockmann, had died a day or two before this little colloquy took place, and he had left behind him a dismantled studio, some good but unfinished studies, and a baby girl whose pretty young mother had not survived her birth. Brockmann had idolized the flaxen-haired mite for one year, and then had ended his existence by catching a deadly chill while sketching in some beautiful but malarious spot. The brotherhood had nursed him loyally and buried him decently, but they were hopelessly perplexed as to how to dispose of his daughter. Most of them lived on two or three pauls a day, everything else being saved for studio rent and artists' materials; and when one was lucky enough to sell a picture, there was a jolly supper for everybody at the Lepre, with mighty songs and much beer; and then what remained of the money was unhesitatingly divided among the poor devils who were most deeply in debt to landlord or colorman.

There was no room for a baby in that straitly-lodged, big-hearted community, and Hans Stravenkilde had been driven to lay the case before the Vice-consul of his nationality, hoping that he would undertake the charge. But the official, a banker and a Roman, refused to be responsible for the child in any way. Indeed, he was indignant at the mere suggestion. He told Hans that if he were to take on all the destitute orphans that pauper foreigners left be-



hind them, he would soon turn his house into a foundling hospital. And what was the Pietá for, but just such waifs, he would like to know? Pin the child's name on her clothes and drop her into the Rota. Good-morning.

And Hans had departed and walked home, much depressed. He had stopped a moment on his way, to look at the cushioned dumb-waiter open to the street in the wall of the Pietá; he knew that one or other of the nuns was stationed behind it through every minute of the night and day, to turn it inwards the instant a child had been laid on the pillow, to gather the poor abandoned little thing into safety and fellowship with many hundreds of others who were sheltered behind those huge charitable walls, and were better fed, better loved, better educated than most of them would ever have been in their own homes. Hans knew all about it, yet his heart ached at the thought of leaving this particular baby there, and Carl fully shared his unwillingness. He had just picked up Giannella and was making funny faces at her, so that the little creature first seemed inclined to cry; then she caught the smile in her tormentor's blue eyes and laughed aloud.

At this a thin, dark woman in peasant's dress raised herself from where she had been gathering up some littered papers in a corner, and came towards the young men, holding out her arms to the child, who at once sprang into them with the confidence of long familiarity. The woman smoothed down the rumpled skirt, wiped off the dust which the small



pink palms had gathered on the floor, and then stood looking at the two friends of her late master. They had been speaking in their own language, but she knew they were talking about the baby, and she had caught the words "Pietà" and "Rota."

"Well," she said, in a deep masculine voice, "and what becomes of this one?"

"That is a hard question, Mariuccia," Hans replied. "There is nobody who wants her, except we poor devils of artists who have nowhere to put her — and the Signor Console told us we had better take her to the Pietà."

He had turned and looked out of the window as he spoke, and Carl followed his example. Neither cared to meet the woman's glance; they both knew how she loved the child.

Mariuccia's brows met in a dark line and her eyes flashed angrily. "A fine piece of advice," she cried. "That consul is an animal, without heart. The Pietà indeed, for my poor padrone's child! Is there no good lady who will take her and bring her up properly? Signor Brockmann of good memory was a gentleman — though he had no money, poverino, and this bit of sugar should be taken care of like a signorina."

"What can we do, Mariuccia?" Hans exclaimed. "All that you say is true, but there are no relations — and we and the other boys are not married — it will have to be the Pietà, I am afraid."

Mariuccia pondered, looking down at the small fluffy head on her shoulder. At last she spoke. "Give her to me. I will take her to my brother at Castel



Gandolfo. His wife is a good woman. They have six children — one more will make no difference. And there is at least bread for all, and wine, and salad in the garden. She will do well there.”

“That is splendid,” cried Hans. “Bravo, Mariuccia. We will send some money for her whenever we can, and she will be happy with you.”

“I shall not stay in the country,” Mariuccia replied. “I have to earn my living. I must find another place, here in Rome. If the Signori can help me to do that I shall be glad. But I shall get to see Giannella sometimes, and when she grows big you signorini must manage to have her go to school. You are good boys — the Madonna will help you to sell your beautiful pictures — and then I will come and remind you of Giannella. For she is a lady. She cannot grow up to gather chestnuts and work in the fields. She must be instructed, like her poor papa.”

This was a long speech for Mariuccia, who was a rather saturnine person generally. Evidently she had taken the matter deeply to heart, and her solution seemed such a satisfactory one that the young men were only too thankful to accept it.

So the studio was cleared out and the landlord took the key and some of the properties in lieu of rent due; a few feminine belongings left behind by poor Mrs. Brockmann were packed away by Mariuccia to be kept for Giannella; a coat and a pair of boots, almost all that had not been sold during the artist's illness to provide necessities, she begged for as a propitiatory offering to her brother. Then the two



young men went back to their work, their hard, cheery lives, and trusty comrades; and in a few hours they had managed to throw off the effects of the tragedy which had absorbed them for the last ten days, for, thank Heaven, the "Donna" had taken charge of the baby.

. . . . .

The sun was striking low through the boles of the ancient elms which line the road from Albano to Castel Gandolfo. It was a hot September evening, and the dust rose in a yellow haze under the feet of a woman who was walking quickly towards the latter place. She was dressed in the costume of the hills; the short, full skirt swung wide at every step, the scarlet bodice gave easy play to her tall, spare figure. On her shoulders was the beautifully draped little shawl crossing over the bosom and showing the spotless camisole of heavy linen, ornamented with handmade lace of ancient pattern; round her neck were the dark red corals, and in her ears the long gold earrings — flashing now and again in the last sunbeams — which testified that she came of good stock and had inherited proper plenishings from the women of her race. She walked as if the road, the woods on either hand, the campagna below and the mountains beyond, belonged to her by right. The heavy basket on her head might have been an archaic crown, so lightly did it poise as she swung along, and she seemed equally untroubled by the weight of a sleeping child on one arm and a nondescript collection of bundles in the other.



Mariuccia was going home. It mattered little that the home was not her own, but her brother's, that its four stone rooms were crowded with children, and that she was bringing another to leave there, quite uncertain of its reception. She was in her own country, striding through the good dust instead of over the city pavements, smelling the hot, dry fragrance of the grapes hanging in masses from the stripped vines where the vineyards terraced down to the campagna on her left; hearing the chestnut burrs rustle to the ground in the woods on her right; heading for the place where she was born, for the grand sour bread and honest wine, the snowy beds piled mountains high under embroidered sheets and quilted coverlets, the blest palms and roses round the picture of the Immacolata on the wall — for the fountain in the piazza, the whispered greetings across the women's benches in the church, for the well-known faces and the broad speech of home.

It was three years since she had been there. Long ago she had made up her mind not to marry, telling her relations that since a woman must work for somebody, she chose to work for a master who would pay her, and whom she could leave if she chose, rather than for a husband who would give her no wages, would beat her if the fancy took him, and with whom she must remain all her life. So she had taken service in Rome, and, though her last venture had ended sadly, was on the whole contented with her lot. She had saved the greater part of her wages for the last ten years, had found kind, decent padroni of the genial



middle-class sort, and was looked upon by the relations in the hills as a superior person of solid fortune whom it was well to treat politely. She was bringing presents for the family now — cakes and sweetmeats for the children, a bottle of rosolio and the boots and coat for her brother, and a roll of linen and a green rosary for the sister-in-law — and the rosary had been blessed by the Pope. Her old friend, the sacristan of San Severino, had asked the Curato, and the Curato had asked the Cardinal's secretary, and then the Cardinal himself had procured the Holy Father's blessing; and Mariuccia had put the sacred thing away till she should feel more worthy to use it. Now the moment had come to do something really great, so that sister Candida should be dazzled into receiving "la Pupa" with open arms, and the rosary must be sacrificed.

It is but a short distance from Albano, whither Mariuccia had traveled in the disjointed vettura which daily lumbered out from Rome over the Appian Way, to Castel Gandolfo, the summer sojourn of the Popes. As she entered the little town, the girls were gathered round the fountain, filling their urns and chattering as gaily as roosting sparrows; the young men lounged on the steps of the church, hands in pockets, a rose or carnation stuck behind the ear to show that they were in good spirits; and a gathering of thirsty, dust-parched carrettieri, their huge, brightly-colored carts obstructing the street, were drinking bumpers of red wine in the low, dark doorway of the Osteria, under the swinging bunch of broom which was its only sign.



Smells of cooking, of freshly-baked bread, of wet linen hanging to dry from upper windows, and many less savory scents filled Mariuccia's nostrils with familiar pleasure. The Ave Maria was pealing from the tower, and she turned aside to kneel for a moment in the well-known church. Then she came out, turned up a side street and made for a little square house that stood in its own vineyard just beyond the farther gate of the town.

Ah, there was no doubt about her welcome. A tribe of black-eyed, red-cheeked children broke upon her like a tornado, with yells of joy; sister Candida came hurrying to the door and led her in rejoicing, taking baby and burdens from her without a question; while brother Stefano, who had just got his pigs safely home from the chestnut wood behind the house, came clamping in with earth-stained clothes and a week's beard on his beaming face, and kissed Mariuccia on both cheeks, inquired for her health, told his wife to get her some supper, all without more than one glance at the flaxen-haired infant who had been deposited safely out of reach of the children, in the very middle of the huge white bed which was the chief ornament of the room. Guests must not be questioned, whatever they choose to bring; Mariuccia would speak when she was ready.

That moment did not come till all the presents had been produced and rejoiced over, and the young ones had fallen asleep with open mouths and sticky fingers, and the three elders were sitting round the table by the light of the tall brass lamp in which all four



burners had been kindled in honor of the visitor. The pure olive oil glowed brightly and cast a friendly radiance over the consultation. Mariuccia, desperately in earnest now, was stating her case as she considered it should be stated; not precisely as it really stood, of course; that would never have done. Giannella, Stefano and his wife learnt, was certainly an orphan, but there were rich relations in some barbaric country over there — Mariuccia's gesture indicated enormous vagueness — who would wish her to be well cared for, and who would pay splendidly for such care when they came to fetch her, as they would do before very long. She was a good-tempered little thing, and had never been ailing for a day since she was born — and so pretty. There was not such another blonde head in Rome. The people turned to look at her in the street when Mariuccia took her out on a Sunday. Candida hesitated a little, then went and looked at the sleeping child, all rosy and golden, on the white pillow. Stefano glanced at her questioningly as she returned. This was going to be her affair, not his, and she must decide.

“It is well, Mariuccia,” she said, without even looking towards her husband. “You can leave her here. Is she baptised?”

“I saw to that,” Mariuccia replied. “Here is the certificate from San Severino.” And she drew out of her pocket a stiff paper which none of the three could read, but on which they recognized the big, round seal of the Keys and Tiara.

“I will keep it,” Mariuccia said, “and if it is



wanted you can send for it. Her name is Giannella, don't forget. She eats soup and bread, just what you gave your own babies at that age. Mamma mia, I am sorry to part with her, pretty heart! But I must go back to Rome and find a new, rich padrone, or how else can I leave a fortune to those fine nephews and nieces of mine by-and-by?"

"You are too good to the little rascals already," said Candida. She was not a mercenary person; but Stefano, who had the family cares on his mind, brightened up, and uncorked the rosolio. Three thimblefuls were drunk to the general health; then the tapers were lighted on the family altar, where a splendid Bambino Gesù, dressed in pink silk, held out his waxen hands under the glass globe and smiled on his disciples. The night prayers were said; one low light was left burning in each room — since only the animals sleep in the dark — and Mariuccia fell asleep beside Giannella in the best bed, with a great weight lifted off her heart.



## CHAPTER II

MARIUCCIA only stayed two days in her native town; then she bade farewell to Giannella (who had already made friends with the eldest niece and the youngest pig) and returned, very light-handed, to seek for a new master in Rome. She had made up her mind to find a quiet, well-regulated bachelor to care for this time. No more heartaches over young mothers and forsaken orphans for her. She realized fully the responsibility she had assumed for the Brockmann baby, and courageously faced the likelihood of having to meet most of its expenses herself. Those young gentlemen were kind, yes, but they were just boys, and would probably forget until she reminded them; and then it was always doubtful whether they would have any money to give for their dead friend's child. She had made light of this part of the question in speaking to them, but she was resolved that Stefano and Candida, with their own large family to provide for, should not be out of pocket on Giannella's account; neither must they ever imagine that the payments for the little girl come from anyone but the supposed rich relations who were to hear such good news of her progress under their care. With all their goodness, it would have wounded them deeply to think that Mariuccia's spare cash, which would have helped to start the nephews and nieces in the world, was be-



ing spent on the child of strangers. She had two hundred and fifty scudi in the Savings Bank of the Pietà, an institution which, with its merciful pawnbroking department, its safe investments for the poor people's earnings, and its all-embracing Foundling Hospital and affiliated Training Schools, met the wants of the lower classes in those opulent days in a fairly complete manner. In her steady Roman way, Mariuccia had thought out her own case, and was resolved to find a quiet and solvent padrone with whom she could live in peace and security for many years to come. So she went to consult Fra Tommaso, the lay brother who acted as sacristan at San Severino, a popular church served by some Marist Fathers, down in the oldest quarter of the city, near the Tiber. Fra Tommaso was an old friend, like herself a native of Castel Gandolfo, and the deep-seated clan feeling imposed obligations of mutual helpfulness on the compatriots. Ever careful of the courtesies, she had brought him a present of fruit and wine, and a couple of plump pigeons, from the place of his birth, and counted on his being able to interest the Fathers in finding a good place for her. They knew everybody in the district and were the general referees for a thousand matters civic and domestic.

San Severino had an imposing entrance from the Via Ripetta, where it stood, a little back from the street, in a semi-circular piazzale of its own. A series of low, broad steps led up to the rounded platform, wide enough to accommodate the blind man, the woman with the footless baby, and the parish epileptic,



who all had their authorized stations in a row near the door in order to receive the never-failing alms of week-day worshipers and Sunday congregations. They brought their chairs with them in the morning, and, after hearing the first Mass, settled themselves for the day; their little stores of food were slipped under the chairs; the woman had her stocking to knit (for the baby always held out its hand for the coppers); the blind man had his tin box to rattle at each approaching footstep; the epileptic had to put his wooden alms bowl at his feet, since his hands trembled too much to hold it. Among these three there was much good fellowship, but they looked askance at the privileged cripple whose crutches reposed all day against a battered arm-chair close to the church door, and who in his turn held aloof from them. For he was an ancient man of decent standing, having been in his day a mason who lost the use of his limbs through a fall from the cupola of San Severino; he now considered that he was as much a part of the church and its organization as the Father Rector himself. He never solicited alms when, by an ingenious arrangement of cords round his hand and the back of his chair, he raised the heavy, padded leather curtain for people to pass into the church; but many a silver paoletto or double baiocco was dropped into the hat on his knees in the course of the day, and the calm, contented expression of his face bespoke a mind at rest from earthly cares.

Mariuccia nodded to the little parade of incurables as she came up the steps on the morning after her



return from Castel Gandolfo. She was of the people, and they would have scorned to beg from her, but she found a sugar-plum in her pocket for the baby's grimy little palm, a packet of snuff for the blind man (who was accused of seeing fairly well after dark) and a copper for the epileptic; they would all pray for her and further her success. To Sor Checco, the cripple, she spoke a cheery good-morning, and begged his acceptance of a small flask of "vino santo," which, she assured him, would be good for his health. Then she inquired whether Fra Tommaso were about? She was anxious to speak to him.

At that moment Fra Tommaso emerged from under the opposite side of the leather curtain, broom in hand, and began to sweep down the steps. When he had finished his task, accompanying it with his invariable grumblings at the dirt that people would track up with them, he declared himself at his countrywoman's disposal, and led her through the church to a dark disused side-chapel where he kept his brooms and pails, his oil and candles, and where there was one old chair which he could offer to a visitor.

After many preambles Mariuccia preferred her request. Did Fra Tommaso know of a place for a respectable woman, over thirty, who could cook and wash and iron with anybody? Yes, it was not to boast, but she could say that she knew her business, and as for the marketing — well, she could make a paolo go as far as any housekeeper in Rome.

Fra Tommaso pondered, his chin in his hand, his eyes on the ground, and Mariuccia watched him anx-



iously. He was a thin, wiry man of forty or thereabouts, with a rather hollow face and very bright eyes. Hardy old age was stamped on every seam and fold of his black cassock, with its wide shoulder cape and leathern girdle, from which dangled various keys and a heavy rosary. The Church, which finds a use for all faithful enthusiasms, had taken him into her service many years before; seeing that no amount of patient teaching could induct the knowledge of Latin into his head, she had made him one of the doorkeepers of the House of the Lord, and he was perfectly happy and contented in that capacity. He had elevated sacristanship to a fine art. The three or four dozen oil lamps which lighted the various altars and shrines were always replenished, always bright, and the oil was measured out as carefully as if it had been molten gold. The candlesticks were burnished, every candle end utilized, and the droppings of virgin wax collected and sold again to the chandlers for the benefit of the Church. The chairs were piled high at the far end of the nave and the floor swept within half-an-hour after the last Mass of the day had been said: and Fra Tommaso was a walking terror to the unruly urchins who would try to slip in to chatter and play near the door when the sun was too hot or the rain too chill in the streets. He was a little severe on idlers and beggars, but for all the respectable poor he had a friendly interest, taking a good deal of pride in the position of trust which enabled him to lay their requests and perplexities before one or other of the Fathers. The saint of the community, wise, detached



old Padre Ambrosio, still looked upon Fra Tommaso as a boy, and sometimes warned him not to let himself be drawn too closely into the thousand distracted interests of the world. "Even charity, my son," he would say, "has its limitations. Beware of letting these good people (especially the women, who would almost drive an archangel out of heaven with their chatter) distract your mind from higher things. You must become a saint, you know. No Latin is needed for that. Only recollection, and prayer and faithfulness to the duties of your state."

"You are right, Padre," Fra Tommaso would say, feeling duly contrite under the gentle rebuke, "I will certainly be more careful." But do what he would, his lively interest in the affairs of his fellow-creatures sprang into life again the moment he came in contact with them. He knew all the habitués of the church by sight; the stories and circumstances of most of them were familiar to him; he would lie awake at night sometimes, wondering if that poor Rosina were getting on better with her mother-in-law, whether Rachel's boy had got the place at the baker's, how much that brigand of a doctor was going to charge the shoemaker for pulling his wife through the fever. If a new face appeared, Fra Tommaso had to know all about its owner within a given time, or he must invent a history for it before he could say his prayers in peace. Padre Ambrosio was so old — and so holy! How could he understand that a poor, uninstructed lay brother, who was running about the church day in, day out, must feel more concerned with the people



than he, who now only descended from the steps of the altar to give himself up to contemplation and prayer in his quiet, distant room? And, when one came to think of it, the "Santissimo" and the blessed Addolorata, and the kind, smiling Saints, were all in the church. They would surely forgive their poor servant for taking pleasure in thinking about his brothers and sisters and managing to be useful to them at the same time.

When Mariuccia explained her needs, Fra Tommaso's mind began to work rapidly over his little map of humanity, and stopped, like a divining rod, over the precise place for her. But certain hesitations and discussions must be gone into, otherwise he and she would miss much pleasant talk. He looked up and met her anxious eyes.

"It is a good idea of yours, commara," he said; "a padrone without family, and of regular habits. Yes, you would do well to find such an one. Let me see — we must think a little. We shall find him in time. Who goes softly goes safely, and also far. Now the other day, a gentleman spoke to me —"

"Yes?" said Mariuccia eagerly. "Who was he? Did he want a servant?"

"He wanted to get rid of one — an extravagant woman, who, he said, was ruining him. But of course he could not send her away till he had found somebody to replace her?"

"Tell me his name. I will present myself at once," exclaimed Mariuccia, rising and reaching for her umbrella.



Fra Tommaso made a dignified gesture of the hand, which commanded her to sit down again and listen patiently. She obeyed with a sigh. Then the sacristan continued, "he is a professor at the university, Signor Carlo Bianchi, a most learned man, who knows more about antiquities than anybody in the world. Capperi! He can tell you who built the palace of the Cæsars, and San Pietro, and the Colosseo. Whenever a statue is found they send for Professor Bianchi, and he does not even need to look at it — he wets his finger in his mouth and feels the marble, and he says, 'Signorimiei, this is the work of Praxiteles, or Scanderbeg, or — or Saint Thomas Aquinas.' Just like that! And they put a ticket with the name on the pedestal and never ask another question. Oh, a man of immense instruction! But they say . . ." and Fra Tommaso shook his head mysteriously, "that he has one ugly vice."

Mariuccia's hand went up to her mouth, imitating the action of drinking, and her eyebrows asked a question.

"Macché!" exclaimed her adviser, looking much shocked, "not he? A man of that instruction? No, to tell the truth — he is terribly stingy."

"So am I," Mariuccia replied, laughing with relief. "We shall get on well together."

"You are economical, Sora Mariuccia," Fra Tommaso looked at her approvingly, "but this poor Professor is truly avaricious. He is afraid even to eat enough, and is as thin as the miller's donkey that carries the grain and never gets any. One day some



buffoon of a student stole his purse as he was entering the lecture-room — oh, he gave it back to him afterwards — but meanwhile the lecture had gone to little pieces — clean out of his head. When the young rascal handed him his purse back he nearly fainted, and they had to give him cognac before he could walk home.”

“Poverino,” Mariuccia cried indignantly, “it was a cruel joke! I am not afraid of this vice, as you call it. He will have to pay me my wages, and that is all that matters to me. I am indifferentissima as to victuals. By the way, what does he pay?”

“Ask for four scudi a month,” Fra Tommaso commanded briskly. He had caught sight of a sunbeam that suddenly shot through the round window in the dome and lit, like a golden arrow, on the crown of the Addolorata. That meant noon in a moment — and his bells to ring. “You ask four, and he will give you three. Go to him to-day — Professor Carlo Bianchi, Palazzo Santafede — it is close by here, you know. You can go out at the back door of the church. Say I sent you. But no, no thanks — for me it is a pleasure to serve you, commara, at any time. Arrivederci!”

The report of a cannon rent the hot, still air, the midday gun from Castel Sant’ Angelo. Instantly every church bell in Rome broke into peals of sound, echoing the announcement of high noon to the city. Fra Tommaso had leaped to his ropes and was working like a demon, trying to outring all the neighboring bells, and especially the one of Santa Eulalia, the con-



vent on the other side of the river; between it and San Severino there was on this point an ancient rivalry which deafened all who lived near either.

Mariuccia departed well content, and at once made her way to the indicated address. The Palazzo Santafede was a huge pile belonging to the prince of that name, and running the whole length of the street which separated the Ripetta from a large quiet piazza, where five well-known palaces had faced each other in dignified seclusion for some centuries past, while many a tragedy and comedy had been played in the great rooms behind their tall, impenetrable walls. The Santafede residence stretched four-square round a vast sunny courtyard where a fountain bubbled in the center, and battered statues of more or less doubtful merit stood on pedestals under the deep colonnade which ran round three sides and afforded shelter for the prince's stables. The present prince was a very young man, with pronounced sporting tendencies, and beautiful English carriage horses and Irish hunters were groomed under the colonnade in the morning. The Princess Mother lived with her son on the "piano nobile," the first floor of the palace, in solemn and unchanging state. All the other apartments, there being no married sons to be housed, were let to tenants whose worldly importance diminished with each flight of stairs they climbed — monsignori, diplomatists, nobles who had no dwelling of their own in Rome paid high rents for spacious suites of rooms on second and third floors. Above these came modest apartments occupied by humbler individuals; and the vast attics,



which a couple of centuries ago had accommodated four or five hundred retainers, were now let out, even in single rooms, to all who could satisfy the *maestro di casa* of their respectability.

The reigning family was away at this time of year and the porter was taking his ease in his shirt sleeves in the shade of the great doorway when Mariuccia marched in and inquired for Professor Bianchi.

"Third staircase to the right, fourth floor," was the reply. And as the inquirer went on under the colonnade, the porter remarked to his wife, who was sitting on the lodge steps nursing her baby, "I wager there goes another cook for Professor Scortica sassi (*Skin-the-stones*). I wonder how long she will stay?"

Mrs. Porter glanced after the receding figure. There was something impressive in that dragonlike stride; the brown hand gripped the thick umbrella as if it had been a saber. "She looks pretty resolute, that female," Mrs. Porter remarked. "I shouldn't wonder if he had found his match this time. I'd rather not be in her place, though."

Mariuccia stood before the green door on the fourth landing of the third staircase. Her first ring at the bell elicited no response, but at the second, footsteps approached and a thin, rasping voice asked the regulation question: "Who is it?"

Mariuccia gave the equally invariable reply, "Friends." Then the shutter behind a tiny grating was pushed back and a pair of spectacled eyes were applied to the bars. The next moment the door was open and Mariuccia stood face to face with a slight,



dark man, hooked of nose and hollow of cheek, but much younger than she had expected to behold.

He understood her errand at once. Her costume and attitude were those of the respectable servant at that time. Quite a gleam of joy came into his eyes. His cook had departed in a rage the evening before, and the unfortunate man of science had burnt a hole in his coat and nearly asphyxiated himself in trying to light the charcoal fire to make his coffee that morning. He led the new applicant for that honor through a long, dark passage, where, as he passed, he hastily closed an open door; but Mariuccia had caught sight of an unmade bed and personal belongings in sad disorder. Instantly a maternal pity for the helpless man took possession of her. That cook must have had a heart of stone to leave the poor fellow like this! He conducted her into a study filled with books, papers, plaster casts and fragments of marble, all arranged carefully enough; but the confusion of his mind and his destitute condition were illustrated by a breakfast tray which had been deposited on the floor, flooded with coffee from an overturned pot which still lay on its side.

This was more than Mariuccia's soul could bear. Before entering on any negotiation she picked up the depressing object and carried it out to where her instinct told her she would find the kitchen. Here she paused for a moment, tray in hand, to survey the possibilities of the place. She nodded approvingly. "Here I remain," she informed herself. "A kitchen of this noble size — full of light — with two windows



on the street. Capperi, one does not find that every day." She glanced out of the window and saw that the opposite wall was that of the long building, running back from San Severino, the building which had housed the Fathers and their schools. Nothing could be better — she felt at home already.

The last occupant of the noble kitchen had left things in a horrible condition, certainly; rubbish everywhere, coppers that could not have been cleaned since Easter — a hecatomb of damaged crockery on the dust-laden shelves. Never mind, all that would be changed in a day. And now for the padrone. He would be wondering what had become of her.

She made her way back to the study and stood at the open door for a moment. The Professor seemed to have forgotten all about her. He was examining some fragments of dirty earthenware on which a pattern was dimly visible; fitting one to another with delicate care, he was murmuring to himself, "Spurious, spurious. That poor Cardinal! Any villain can take him in with rubbish that was baked last year and buried in the right sort of earth! Etruscan indeed. I wonder what he gave for this robaccia? What is it?" He had thrown the fragments down on the table and caught sight of Mariuccia. "Ah yes, I remember — you have come about the donna's place, I think. Who sent you to me?"

"Fra Tommaso of San Severino," she replied; and the Professor looked pleased. "I see the signore is busy, so I will, with his permission, say that I can do everything he will require, and I respectfully ask what



wages he gives. I had five scudi a month with my last padrone."

The Professor's hands flew up in the air and an expression of deepest pain came across his countenance. Mariuccia's spirits rose; the delightful excitement of bargaining was about to begin.

The duel lasted three-quarters of an hour, with varying fortune, first to one and then to the other, of the disputants. Twice Mariuccia seized the cotton umbrella and made as if to depart, outraged at having her just claims disregarded. The second time she almost meant to go; but a deep sigh from her adversary softened her heart. Poor young man, he was really quite "simpatico"—and so forlorn. She paused at the door—and then she knew that she had won the day, for he came after her and laid a hand on her arm.

"It is ruinous, that four scudi a month," he said woefully, "and fifteen baiocchi a day for your food is an insanity—you will die of apoplexy, I know it. But—there—it is said. I must sacrifice myself. Now do go and get me something to eat. That demon would not cook any supper for me last night and I faint, my good woman, I faint."

"Leave it all to me!" she replied. "Poverino! you shall suffer no more." And at once she marched off to take possession of her kingdom.

Within a week the Professor knew that he was in good strong hands; in a month he suspected that he had found a ruler; but he was well satisfied. Excepting the daily wrangle over the money for his market-



ing (the sums he proffered, Mariuccia told him, were quite inadequate to the maintenance of his respected health), all went smoothly and silently, as he liked it to go, in the quite shabby rooms filled with books and flooded with sunshine, where he passed his studious life. Three times a week he lectured at the university, and on other days spent much time among the excavations which constantly brought new treasures to light from Rome's inexhaustible soil. Few visitors ever mounted those steep stairs; occasionally he spent an evening with his illustrious and learned friend, Cardinal Cestaldini, but otherwise he sat in his study after supper, perfectly happy with his lamp, his books, and his cigar; and in all his habits he was regular as clockwork. Mariuccia lay down night after night in her dark bedroom off the passage, thanking Heaven for having bestowed on her the padrone she had dreamed of. She laughed to herself as she thought of his prophecy that she would die of apoplexy. She had brought her own living expenses down to one-half of the sum which she had quite justly claimed. The rest was put by for the baby she had left with Candida at Castel Gandolfo. If no rich relations turned up — and if those nice young friends of poor Signor Brockmann (of good memory) never sent any money for la Giannella — there would be anxious times ahead for her only protector. The Madonna and San Giuseppe would help — that could be counted upon; but one must make what provision one could — with six nephews and nieces on one's conscience!



### CHAPTER III

**I**T was three years before Mariuccia saw Giannella again. Then Candida brought her to Rome, fat and well-looking, to show her to the sister-in-law, who was to be moved, at sight of the pretty, well-fed little girl, to grant a modest request. Once in three months during the passing years a trusty carrettiere from Castel Gandolfo had brought Mariuccia a letter, written for Candida by the official scribe of the "Castello," reporting Giannella's good progress; and Fra Tommaso had read it to the recipient in the empty chapel under the bell tower. The same proven counselor had always written the answer for her, free of charge (it would have been folly to pay the public letter-writer in Piazza San Carlo for what she could get done for nothing!) and had made up and sealed the little packet of money, growing heavier with Giannella's growth, which the carrier took back with him when he dawdled across the campagna to the hills, in his high cart, painted in gorgeous reds and blues, piled with empty barrels in exchange for the full ones he had brought in. A proud man was he. His sheepskin awning was hung with twenty or thirty jingling brass bells; his horses moved leisurely under their great burnished collars; his white lupetto, the fierce little fox-dog without which the outfit would have been incomplete, barked madly at everything on the



road and frenziedly at all the other lupettos on the other carriers' vehicles, and took sole charge of all property during the long pauses at the thatched "Cappanne" where the jolly driver would have a glass of wine and a game of bowls with his compeers to break the monotony of the journey.

The letters he brought four times a year provided the great excitement of Mariuccia's existence, and the Professor knew that for a day or two in every quarter his housekeeper would be slightly less silent and methodical than usual. He understood that there was a child at nurse in the country, an occurrence so common that he never gave it a second thought. He imagined it was Mariuccia's own, and as she never spoke of having a husband, supposed that she was a widow. Once or twice he wondered what kind of a man could have had the courage to espouse such a carabineer in petticoats. He himself had a nervous terror of women, whom he considered as brainless, extravagant creatures, and in spite of his comparative youth, he seemed destined for an old bachelor, so resolutely did he avoid feminine society.

It was therefore a shock to him to return one bright winter day from the university to find his apartment resounding with women's voices and childish laughter. The front-door bell was broken and he was fighting the maestro di casa as to who should pay for repairing it, so he had let himself in with the latchkey and was coming on tiptoe down the passage to have a peep at the intruders, when the kitchen door flew open, and, out of the haze of sunshine within, a small,



golden-headed whirlwind shot forward with a scream of laughter, bumped against his knees, and went down on the bricks with a thud. He sprang back, nearly as alarmed as the child; but before he could find his breath for questioning — or she for crying — two excited women swooped down on the little sufferer, picked her up, felt her all over, tried to drown her sobs with caresses and promises, and finally bore her back to the kitchen without having taken the slightest notice of the indignant master of the house. He judged it best to withdraw to his sanctum, where he sat down in dismal depression. He felt certain that this cataclysm foreboded the destruction of his peace.

It was poor Mariuccia's peace, however, which was disturbed by Candida's visit. Giannella had been splendidly cared for; her clothes were in excellent order. Sister Mariuccia could see for herself that every penny sent for the child had been honestly expended on her. Could she have those red cheeks and bright eyes, could she be such a little wisp of activity and high spirits, if she were not well fed and happy? Candida proudly asked. Surely the rich relations would be more than satisfied. And, since this would redound to Mariuccia's credit and magnify her reward from them, was it too much to ask that she would come forward generously, like the dear, good soul she always was, to help Candida, junior, the eldest niece, to a fine settlement in life? The prosperous parents of a particularly nice young man had made a proposal for Candiduccia. They were willing to take her without a dowry if she could bring the proper



plenishings, the bed and the linen, the chest of drawers and the pearl earrings — and of course the Sunday clothes — without which no self-respecting girl could enter a family. Here was a chance for Candiduccia! But, to tell the truth, things had not gone so very well with Stefano of late. The good donkey had died suddenly; last year the filloxera had got at the grapes — and, in fine, they looked to sister Mariuccia to remember her kind promises and give the money for the outfit. How much? Why, well laid out, perhaps a hundred scudi would do, since of course the linen was there already — Candiduccia had been spinning it ever since she was ten, and Sor Mariano had woven it for her for nothing. Yes, a hundred scudi should do nicely. And dear Mariuccia was so rich and had no children to provide for! A little thing like that would not make much difference to her.

Dear Mariuccia looked down at Giannella (who by this time had taken her old new friend into grace, and had fallen asleep in her arms) and wondered how much further her little stock of money would go. The three years' payments had made sad inroads on the vaunted savings; but that Candida must never know; the money was supposed to come from the rich relations "fuori," myths in whom Mariuccia herself had come to believe in a way at times, even tormenting herself with the possibility of their coming to claim the little waif. For the woman who had refused to marry had plenty of affection to bestow, and Giannella seemed to be the only thing in the world which was her very own, had been her own



ever since she was born and her real mother had slipped away from the costly joys of maternity. Mariuccia had woven pleasant little dreams about the future, and seen herself bringing Giannella to live with her when the child grew bigger and could be taught to move quietly about the house and not disturb the Professor at his books; she had seen her, in imagination, prettily dressed, as became her station in life, and finally ensnaring the affections of some ideally good and handsome young man — who would marry her and bring old Mariuccia to take care of them both and of the beautiful children Heaven would send them. But Giannella must eat many loaves of bread before these pleasant visions could be realized, and who was to provide them but Mariuccia? Four scudi a month was good pay, but how far would it go alone when the precious savings had fitted out Candiduccia and her two younger sisters — for what had been done for one must be done for the others — for entrance into well-to-do families? Mamma mia, it was a perplexing outlook! Well, the Madonna and San Giuseppe must provide. These things were matters of destiny. There was no going back now.

“You will do it, will you not?” came Candida’s anxious question. The suspense was almost unbearable to her.

“Yes, I will do it, Candida mia!” the other woman replied slowly. Then she added more cheerfully, “The ‘tratto’ is the most expensive part. You had better leave the buying of that and the earrings to me. I can combat with these brigands of merchants



better than you can, and here in the city there are fine shops for silk and cloth. You shall have the things the next time the carrettiere goes out. I will give you the money for the bed and the bureau to-day."

Having once made up her mind, no more regrets were admitted and for the next twenty-four hours Mariuccia's feelings were divided between delight at the pretty ways of the child and anxiety lest the Professor should find her trotings to and for, her laughter and occasional tears, too intolerably disturbing. But when it was explained to him that the visitation was but a passing one, he was more patient than could have been expected. The next day Candida bore little Giannella away in good time to catch the vettura for Albano; her farewells took the form of an all-embracing benediction for the generosity of the rich sister; and that afternoon Mariuccia asked her master for permission to go out for a couple of hours. She came home absolutely hoarse with bargaining, bringing a roll of silk that would have stood alone — a gorgeous brocade of red carnations on a cinnamon-colored ground — and two feet of scarlet cloth which looked like geranium petals and felt like a baby's cheek. It had cost five scudi a foot, and with some broad gold trimmings would make the half sleeves from wrist to elbow which were relatively the most expensive part of the superb Albanese costume. It would also provide the stiff little stomacher into which the voluminous shawl of fine lace would be tucked. For this last, as well as for the lace apron,



Mariuccia had gone to the selling department of the Pietá, where unredeemed pledges were disposed of, and had found there just the right earrings, wide hoops of pale gold with three fair-sized pearls dangling from each. If the bride lived to be ninety and a great-grandmother, she would wear this dress every Sunday and Feast Day at Mass and would leave it as a treasured heirloom to her descendants. In the goatskin trunk under her bed Mariuccia kept the one which her own mother and grandmother had worn at their weddings and ever after. No holidays came into her dull life, but the "tratto" must not be parted with while there was even a faint possibility of her having to appear at church in her native town.

The precious sendings were confided, a day or two later, with many anxious recommendations, to Sebastiano the carrettiere, who promised not to get off the cart for a moment, no matter what temptations might assail him till they were safely deposited at their destination.

"Leave it all to me," he exclaimed, slapping his chest proudly. "Am I not a galantuómo? Do you think I would let such stuff as that out of my sight for a moment? Diamini! We have our principles, we carrettieri! Not a single glass will I drink before I reach Castel Gandolfo."

Mariuccia fancied that the white lupetto on the driving seat winked one eye, quite like a Christian, at this assurance, the like of which he had probably heard before, and she felt a little uncomfortable about the goods until, two weeks later, the receipt



for them came in the shape of a box of confetti tied with white ribbon, the usual "faire part" of an accomplished wedding. She offered it, as in duty bound, to the Professor, who accepted it blandly and made the sugar-plums suffice for two meals, thereby effecting a saving of at least ten baiocchi.

. . . . .

Another three years went by, and when Candida, as Mariuccia had foreseen, came to solicit for Teresina the favors which had been accorded to her elder sister, Mariuccia saw that some decisive step must be taken; she could no longer pay for Giannella's board in her brother's family. Twice already she had been to see Mr. Brockmann's artist friends, and though they had received her with great kindness and cordiality, they had been able to help her but little. One was married, and had all he could do to maintain a wife and child; the other seemed to be as poor as ever, and only necessity would have made his visitor accept the few dollars which he insisted on giving her. There was no one else to appeal to. Mariuccia gave almost her last scudo to fit out Teresina for her wedding, and then, leaving Candida in the kitchen with Giannella (a much quieter little person than of yore) standing in awed silence beside her chair, marched boldly into the Professor's study and asked his permission to keep the child with her henceforth.

Bianchi looked up from his papers in blank dismay. Keep a child in the house? The thing was out of the



question. What was Mariuccia thinking of to propose such an absurdity?

“If the Signor Professor really wants to know what I am thinking of,” she replied, “I will tell him, in all sincerity. I am thinking of a new place, where I can have Giannella with me. I heard of one this morning. And they give five scudi a month.”

Her master's opposition collapsed before this statesmanlike invention. He could not part with his silent, economical jewel of domesticity, to fall into strange and ruthless hands. No, better accept the child, even if it should prove a demon, as he had heard that young children mostly were, and keep his cook. But he made conditions. Under no circumstances was the baby (the flight of time was forgotten by him and he was thinking of something small and noisy that would trip him up at every step) to enter his rooms. And also it must be understood, once and for all, that he must never be asked to contribute to its maintenance. Not a lump of sugar or a crust of bread was it to have from his stores. If people were so silly as to take strange orphans to bring up — Giannella's history had now been explained to him — they must bear the punishment of their spendthrift insanity alone. Perhaps it would teach them wisdom.

Mariuccia's eyes blazed as he said this, and he began to fear that he might have gone too far. But she was generous enough to overlook the insults of a conquered adversary. She thanked him in set terms for the permission to keep Giannella, assured him



that he should neither hear nor see the child; and then she calmed her ruffled feelings by the first impertinent speech that had ever fallen from her lips. "Let the padrone congratulate himself on one point. The chastisements due to what he called spendthrift insanity, and which most persons would consider common charity, would never fall on his respected head."

Then she went back to Candida and told her that Giannella must now remain in the city. Her invisible relations wished her to have a superior education, such as was unattainable in her country home. Candida was frankly sorry. She had come to love the paying nursling almost as if it were her own; and the charge of Giannella, who was looked upon by the neighbors as quite a highborn young heiress, conferred much distinction on her foster parents. As for the child herself, she was appalled at the prospect of being parted from "Mamma Candida" and her lifelong playmates, to remain alone with "Zia Mariuccia," who looked so old and stern. She flung herself into Candida's arms and wept bitterly, the two women watching her in silence. Candida rocked her in her arms while some tears of her own trickled down over the golden hair in which she had taken such pride for years past.

Mariuccia let them weep together. These things were matters of destiny. There was nothing for her to say. Their double grief showed that the little one had been happy at least. Her own turn would come when the parting was over; and though she was racking her brain as to ways and means, she was



confident that she could make Giannella happy too. She rose quietly and prepared as tempting a dinner as her resources would provide, and her sorrowing guests did full justice to it at last. Then all three went out to make the purchases for Teresina; and the streets, the shops, the band playing stridently as a detachment of French soldiers in gay uniforms marched down the Corso, all sent the country-reared child wild with delight. She was finally put to bed with a honey cake under her pillow, and never woke till Candida, who had slipped away in the dawn, was far out on the Via Appia, so occupied with anticipating Teresina's joy over the grand new clothes that there was little place in her mind for anything else.

A few days later Sebastiano brought a big bundle in which Mariuccia found every garment that Giannella had outgrown carefully folded up and saved by her scrupulous keepers, together with odds and ends of playthings, and little pictures of the Saints given for good conduct by the parish priest who had taught her her catechism. There was also a present of cakes and fruit from the teeming Alban garden in the hills. The padrone was offered his due of all, and actually smiled when he found a little person, with round cheeks and funnily puckered brow, reaching up with two hands to put a plate of fresh figs on his dinner-table. The child nearly dropped it when she saw him enter, but summoned up all her courage to shove it on safely. Then she turned and ran at full speed all the way to the kitchen, where she rushed to Mariuccia's side and hid her face in her protector's



voluminous skirts. “ Oh, please, please, ask him not to eat me this time ! ” she wailed. “ I didn’t know he was there — I will never do it again.”

For Mariuccia, determined that the padrone should have no just cause of complaint, had confided to Giannella a terrible secret: the Signor Professor never hurt little girls who obeyed orders, but it was well known that he had once gobbled up a certain naughty child who did not keep out of his way!



## CHAPTER IV

THE Principessa di Santafede was a lady of gravely gracious manners, iron prejudices and active piety, and she entertained a profound belief in the necessity of her own class to the well-being of the world. So far as she was concerned secular history contained but one record worthy of study and imitation, the record of the noble houses of Rome. Each tradition and regulation connected with these was not only a rubric but a dogma. To believe and act thereupon was to find social salvation; all who rejected these articles of faith perish from her consciousness; their names were erased from her "libro d'oro," and they ceased to be. No taint of novelty had cast its shadow over her education. Except that the history books were thicker and the spelling modernized, the teaching she received in the convent along with all the other noble damsels in Rome was the same as that which had been bestowed on her ancestresses for generations past. It had proved entirely sufficient for those eminent ladies, and neither parents nor instructors could see any reason for changing a detail of it. There would be Roman nobles so long as the world lasted; their vast establishments would move ponderously and surely as they had always moved; and a girl brought from her convent to be placed at the head of such an establishment had but to leave



its conduct to the responsible persons, the major-domos, and stewards, and housekeepers, descended from many generations of officials who had served the same "Eccellentissima Casa" in the same capacities. She had but to watch and copy her seniors in order to fulfill her obligations in society, in matrimony, in maternity, to the complete satisfaction of all concerned. Life was quite simple if only people did their duty.

Political crises would occur, of course; the riots and revolutions of 1848, for instance, had been most disturbing. But they had only strengthened the beliefs of right-thinking persons, for, behold, they had passed by like a wave of the sea breaking against the rocks, leaving everything as it was before and as it would be "*in sæcula sæculorum*" so far as Rome was concerned — and Rome was the world.

Prince Santafede had died when their only son was quite a child, and the responsibilities thus devolving on her sufficiently accounted for his widow's grave outlook on life. It was, however, a peaceful and happy life, clouded by few real anxieties, since Onorato had now reached the age of eighteen without giving any serious trouble. He was a cheerful, warm-hearted boy, with no more fixed aversion to study than the remainder of his contemporaries. Accompanied by his tutor, a learned ecclesiastic, he had attended the proper lectures at the university, and, though his education included only the classics and humanities, it had given him all that was then required of a gentleman, fluent and elegant Latin,



a working acquaintance with his own and foreign literatures, charming manners, and a fitting sense of what was due to himself and others. If there was one cloud in his mother's large sky, it was caused by the fact that he did not take her views on the sacredness of family traditions in one or two minor directions, notably that of the expenditure on the stables. Onorato had no other extravagances, but he insisted on riding and driving magnificent imported horses, declaring that it was a public duty to set a higher standard than the prevailing one in such matters. The Princess and Onorato's lamented father had been perfectly contented with their six pairs of coal-black horses, bred on their own lands with hundreds of others destined to be sold all over Italy and Austria. The animals had been driven and cared for by coachmen and grooms also born on the estates; and the Princess could not imagine anything more splendid and appropriate than the high calèche on C. springs in which she took her daily airing; the deep, hearse-like berline swung on leather bands, which carried her to parties, seemed the perfection of comfort and safety; and she felt something like reverence for the yellow stage coach, with blazoned panels and glass sides, with gold-fringed hammercloth and tasseled straps to which the three dazzlingly arrayed footmen hung behind. It was only brought out on grand occasions, for audiences with the Pope or Ambassadors' receptions, and the Princess felt as if her skies were falling when her son, a "Principe del Solio" (supporter of the throne), climbing into it



in all his magnificence of doublet and ruff, gold chain and sword, to go and attend the Holy Father on Easter morning, called it a "lumbering old pumpkin," and declared that if he had his way he would make a bonfire of it in the courtyard. His revolutionary ideas had not only demonstrated themselves by importing foreign horses, but by filling the coachhouses with French carriages and the stables with English grooms, barbarians who, while fulfilling their other duties faithfully enough, grumbled at having to go to church, and thus deeply scandalized the rest of the well-drilled household.

The Princess's brother, Cardinal Cestaldini, Professor Bianchi's learned patron and friend, tried to console his sister for her son's equine irregularities by pointing out that they were not so extravagant as they appeared, since Onorato was bent on improving the Roman breed and thus adding considerable value to the Santafede horse farms; also that a young man might spend his money on worse things than horses. This was at all events an innocent taste, and, seeing that Onorato had no inclination for deeply serious pursuits, and was too young to get married — well, his mother must be patient and not estrange him by any undue severity. Paolo Cestaldini's own happy lot inspired him with much indulgence for those less blessed. He felt that few were as fortunate as himself, delivered from worldly distractions at the start by what he considered the undeserved grace of a religious vocation, and then provided with the most elevating and beneficent occupation for his leisure.



In the delights of Art and Archæology, subjects which he could discuss with the most learned, he found an inexhaustible source of interest and recreation. Incapable of an ungenerous or insincere thought, he was merciful and gentle in his judgment of others. Religion, which had built up round his sister a wall of defense against the temptations which assault those in the world, had turned the other side of its golden shield to him, and mellowed and enriched the man's ascetic nature and broadened his mind while it refined his appreciations. To the married woman it was a fortress, to the lonely prelate, a garden.

The Princess listened rather despondently to her brother's encouraging exhortations. They did not alter her conviction that Onorato was on the wrong road, and she resolved to pray more earnestly (good soul, that would hardly have been possible) and to apply herself with more fervor to her many works of charity in order to obtain his reformation. Full of these thoughts, she stopped at the church of San Severino on her way home, dismissed her carriage, since the Palazzo Santafede was only a few hundred yards away, and found a good deal of comfort in saying her prayers in the silent, dusky church.

Emerging half-an-hour later, she saw just before her in the street, a servant woman leading a little girl by the hand. The airy poise of the little figure, the light step and quick turn of the small head, took the Princess's fancy. Above all, the shining golden braids hanging down to the child's waist aroused her



admiration, for to be fair is to be loved, in dark Romagna. Mariuccia and Giannella, unconscious that their unapproachably illustrious landlady was following them, passed up the street, turned into the piazza, and disappeared under the arched entrance of the palace. By the time the Princess reached it, they were lost to view round the turn of the colonnade. She paused to ask the porter, who was grounding his tasseled staff and sweeping the pavement with his hat, if he could tell her who the child was. Did she belong to anyone in the palazzo?

The Excellency was informed that the woman conducting her was Professor Bianchi's servant, and that the little girl had been brought by a contadina from the country a few days before. Nothing more was known. The "donna" rarely spoke to anyone. Did the Excellency wish inquiries to be made?

Certainly not, the Princess replied, Professor Bianchi's family was his private affair. She discouraged all gossip about her tenants. Ferretti, the *mæstro di casa*, was responsible for them and she never interfered with his wise and careful management. Still, he had told her, when letting the rooms, that the Professor was a bachelor; and Bianchi was sufficiently distinguished in his own learned circle for his rather crabbed characteristics to have become more or less known to the public. The Princess, as she mounted the broad marble stairs to her own apartment, wondered whether the child were some relation of his, and felt a certain pity for the bright little thing if she were really condemned to live



with the parsimonious man of science and his grim-looking servant.

She was soon to know more about Giannella. Mariuccia was just now terribly puzzled by a new responsibility which immediately faced her. At seven years of age children must begin to go to school, and how was this to be managed for Giannella? There were free schools all over the city, kept by the nuns for the children of the poor. The little ones were collected from their homes in the morning by trusty persons who called for them and brought them back in the evening, receiving a tiny monthly sum from the parents for the service. That was all very well, and the nuns took fine care of the small people during the day; but Mariuccia was obstinately set on one point, and she meant to fight for her convictions; *la Giannella* was a lady. Providence above seemed to have overlooked the fact and had steadily refused to furnish the wherewithal to keep it before the eyes of the world; but the self-constituted representative of Providence on earth would take no denial on the subject, and nothing would have induced her to let Giannella be herded with the children of the city plebeians, to learn their rough ways, their common speech, to remember when she grew up that she had been as one of them. It was one thing to be a paying nursling in the clean, rich country, cared for and cherished by pious, respectable people like Stefano and Candida, who kept their boys and girls in the fear of God and would have punished a bad word, an act of disobedience or even a disrespectful



glance, with a sound beating; it was quite another to mix with low-born children of the city, whose parents, coming from no one knew where, owned no feudal master, no foot of land, and had not been obliged to live up to the stern standard of morals and manners required in the proud "castelli." Giannella had learned her catechism and many pretty hymns from the parish priest, and the first elements of reading from some Franciscan nuns at Castel Gandolfo. Who was to take up the good work and endow her with all the mysterious instruction which it seemed a lady should possess by the time her hair went up and her skirts came down?

Mariuccia put the question to her spiritual director, a Capuchin monk of great age and sanctity, to whom she had been commended by the Curato at home when she first came to Rome as a young woman some eighteen years before, and to whom she had been loyally constant, tramping to his distant monastery on the Palatine once a month from whatever part of the town she happened to be living in. He could not help her much, although he said he would keep the matter in mind and see if some charitable person could get the little girl received as a boarder in one of the many convent schools. But Mariuccia felt that this was a vague outlook, and she confided her trouble to the ever-sympathetic Fra Tommaso, who listened with his usual interest and curiosity to her story.

"But," he objected, when she had ceased speaking, "what has become of the relations who used to send



you the money for her? Will they not pay any longer?"

"Fra Tommaso mio," she replied, "I must tell you something. It is now a long time since they sent any money for Giannella. Perhaps they are ill — or affairs may not be going so very well over there — what do I know? Meanwhile I could not let the child want, so you see —"

The sacristan pursed his lips and shook his head. "That is bad — very bad. And has Signor Bianchi been paying for her? That would be a miracle indeed."

"No," said poor Mariuccia, driven to tell the humiliating truth at last, "I have had to find the money myself. Of course the relations will repay me when they have time, but meanwhile two of my nieces have got married, and that cost me a great deal; and now, until I hear from over there," her thumb went over her shoulder indicating the unknown regions where the Brockmann family was supposed to have its being, "I do not know what to do. Giannella ought to go to a good school. She is seven years old, and of an intelligence — God bless her! But I cannot manage it."

During this speech Fra Tommaso had been thinking with all his might. Suddenly he banged his forehead with his clenched fist. "Head of a pumpkin that thou art!" he exclaimed to the delinquent member. "We have got it — and I never even thought of it. That Principessa of yours — the Santafede — she was a Cestaldini."



This piece of genealogical information appeared to electrify Mariuccia. "But what are you telling me?" she cried. "Is it true?"

"Of course it is true," he asseverated; "a Cestadini, the daughter of the old prince who died in his palace at Castel Gandolfo just after Stefano got his leg broken riding the bad mule. Don't you remember, the church was hung with black for a month? And you snipped off a piece of the stuff to dress a doll like a 'seminarista' to tease me with, because I wanted to be a priest? Why, you belong to her father's people—she must help you. Go to the Princess at once."

"Of course she would help me," Mariuccia replied rather sadly, "if I could ever get to speak to her. But that is impossible, quite impossible! I should have to ask the porter to ask the lady's maid to ask Signora Dati, the Princess's companion, to ask the Excellency—and the message would never reach Signora Dati. Those familiars have no hearts. We must think of something else."

"Leave it to me to be done," Fra Tommaso said; "I will see about it."

It was Mariuccia's turn to be curious. "But how?" she asked. "Would it not be as hard for you as for me to speak with the Excellency?"

"No," he replied; "she comes every morning to the seven o'clock Mass, and I could speak to her quite easily. But I have a better way. Behold, is not our Cardinal her brother? And has he not always been for me of a goodness, of a condescension? Always



a kind word or a little joke when he sees me. ‘How does it go, Tommaso? Have you worn out any more bell ropes with that Herculean ringing?’ (Hercules was the first sacristan of St. Peters, you know, Sora Mariuccia, and was so strong that he could ring the big bell with his hands.) Or else he says, ‘You are looking thin, my son. You should eat some of your fat pigeons.’ Ah, what an egregious ecclesiastic, what a man of learning, and yet so simple! To him I will relate these facts, and he will say to his sister, ‘What is this? I learn that you have Botti’s Mariuccia in your house and you have never sent for her to let her kiss your hand? But this is great neglect! What would our papa of good memory have said at your thus overlooking one of his people? Let it be remedied at once!’”

Mariuccia clasped her hands, “Fra Tommaso mio,” she wailed, “I should die of fright if I had to pass all those famigliari in the sala and go into those fine rooms — and in these old clothes! If I were at home I could wear the costume — but here! No, since you are so condescending, so kind, do this. Tell that good Eminenza all about Giannella and how I am astrologizing my head already to feed and clothe her — for the padrone will not give her so much as a crumb from his table — and get him to ask the Princess to send her to school. That indeed would be an action of the greatest merit and the Madonna will accompany you wherever you go!”



## CHAPTER V

A FEW days later Fra Tommaso found an opportunity of laying Mariuccia's case before the Cardinal. The latter usually paid a short visit to the church in the late afternoon, on his return from the drive which was as much a part of his daily life as the reading of his breviary. His Mass was always said in his private chapel, but he found in the large, quiet church greater space of detachment, an atmosphere rich with the devotion of centuries, and an impersonal companionship very sympathetic to him in the chapels and monuments which had been the silent witnesses of his silent spirit's growth. It was but a few steps from the church to his own door, and the constant presence of his chaplain and servants on all other occasions made the short solitary walk a pleasure in itself.

Fra Tommaso ventured to ask him to come into the dark home of bell ropes and candlesticks and there with many apologies for obtruding such common affairs on his noble attention, explained poor Mariuccia's perplexities and besought the Eminenza's intervention with his illustrious and charitable sister.

The Cardinal listened to him with much attention, disentangled the real facts from the picturesque accompaniments of explanation and gesture in which the sacristan involved them at every turn. When



Fra Tommaso mentioned Professor Bianchi, the prelate nodded his head, saying, "Ah, the Signor Professore is known to me. He is a man much respected, also very much occupied. Doubtless he has not had time to think about the little girl. He is not rich, and it is not to be expected that he should bear the charges of her education. I will speak to the Princess and see what can be done."

Fra Tommaso broke out into expressions of devout gratitude, and the Cardinal smiled on him and slipped away. He had a strong feeling of kindness for the cheerful, humble servant of the Fathers, a feeling which, years ago, had been one of acute pity for a brokenhearted boy who had nourished high hopes of entering the Church — open to peasant as to prince if God have bestowed on him the needful gifts — and who had found it impossible to assimilate the required learning. All other requisites of the true vocation were there, singleness of heart, deep humility, fervor and faith. But some congenital defect of brain, unperceived until the intellect attempted to grapple with the difficulties of Latin and theology, barred the way for Tommaso. When this was so apparent that his patient instructors were obliged to give their unfavorable verdict, the shock had almost overcome his reason and his faith. Paolo Cestaldini, then a young priest just ordained, had rescued both. He had kept the boy near him for some time, and had only let him go when he saw that resignation had done its work, when he had enabled Tommaso to realize that the glory of God required service of many



grades, and that all the virtues of a religious vocation can be as well acquired, preserved, and practised, in the humblest as in the most illustrious of these.

The result of the conversation under the bell tower was a visit from good Signora Dati, the humble but devoted companion of the Princess and the chief intermediary of her many charities, to Mariuccia, who was quite overcome by such an honor. The Princess had two excellent qualities of the administrator; she spared no trouble and lost no time in learning all that could be learned about a case presented for her consideration; and then she took proper time to decide on her course of action. The immense ramifications of charities in Rome provided answers to almost all the problems connected with the relief of suffering and poverty. The first step was to catalogue the applicant's needs. So Signora Dati was commissioned to find out to what class of society the golden-haired waif on the other side of the courtyard belonged, and also to learn whatever she could of the morals of her defunct parents. The Princess was convinced that heredity played a great part in the drama of development and should be suppressed or fostered according to its character.

The Professor was absent when Mariuccia's visitor climbed the long stairs and rang at the green door. She was a thin, pale little lady, with the eyes of a saint and the mouth of a judge. Her costume gave almost the impression of a conventual habit, with its full black skirt and silk shoulder cape and black lace head covering. This last indicated with delicate pre-



cision the exact rank of the wearer, an educated and refined dependent, placed half way between the woman of rank, who could wear a bonnet, and the woman of the people, who must go bare-headed if she would preserve her reputation.

Signora Dati had become an expert in charity. It was impossible to deceive her as to character and veracity. After half-an-hour's conversation with Mariuccia — conversation during which the latter stood respectfully at a little distance from her interlocutor's chair and gave her story with admirable directness, uncomplicated with legends about Giannella's relations, and with a complete unconsciousness of any merit on her own part — Signora Dati was satisfied on all the points which she had come to investigate. Giannella's parents had been respectable if unfortunate people; they had been duly married; there was apparently no taint of crime or disease to descend to their child. Only one thing more remained to be ascertained — what kind of training in bearing and manners had this good but uneducated woman and her family been able to give the child?

“And now I would like to see the little girl,” she said; “will you call her in?”

Mariuccia stamped away into the kitchen and returned, pushing Giannella into the room before her. The child stood still for an instant looking at the visitor. Then she came forward, raised Signora Dati's hand to her fresh young lips, kissed it, and stepped back, looking the lady full in the face with her innocent gray eyes, waiting to be spoken to. The



commissioner of charities, whose visit had purposely been unannounced, returned the glance, taking in the smoothly braided hair, the round cheeks and clean dimpled hands, the nicely ironed frock and pinafore, the spotless stockings and strong strap shoes. An immense respect for Mariuccia rose in her heart. What it must have cost the woman to keep the child like this — on four scudi a month! It was heroism — nothing less. And the manners were perfect; that, however, was not so surprising, seeing that all Giannella's life had been spent among the rigidly self-respecting inhabitants of the castelli. It was only in large towns that the poorer classes had become insubordinate and vulgar.

After a few questions and answers, Signora Dati rose to go. Mariuccia accompanied her to the door, and there, Giannella having been sent back to the kitchen, she said that the Princess would consider the question of the child's education and would communicate with her as soon as it had been decided upon. Meanwhile it would be well to preserve silence on the matter, as her Excellency did not care to have her charities noised abroad.

When Mariuccia went back to her interrupted task of preparing the padrone's dinner, Giannella was standing at the window watching a flock of pigeons hovering over a small terrace on the roof of the opposite building. It was on a higher level than the Bianchi apartment, and the parapet shut out any view of what might lie behind it, but the parapet itself was gay with flowers; the deep red carnations that the Romans



love hung far over the edge, swaying in the sun and breeze; a little lemon-tree in a green box held up its pale golden fruit among shining leaves; the pigeons whirled about as if in great excitement, while every now and then a dark masculine head bobbed up for a moment above the line of red bricks, and then disappeared again. Giannella had forgotten all about the visitor who had come to decide her fate, and was completely absorbed in the brightness and movement across the way.

Mariuccia came behind her and laid a hand on her shoulder, leaning out to see what so interested the child. Then she smiled, and said, half to herself, "That poor Fra Tommaso! He is at it again, feeding his birds and talking to them as if they were Christians. Shall I tell you something, Giannella? When I took you out to Castel Gandolfo — and you were no longer than that — (she measured half-a-yard on her arm) and as fat as a little calf — I brought back two pigeons in a cage for Fra Tommaso, thinking he would cook and eat them. Figure to yourself *piccolina*, that he made a little house for them up there on his *loggia*, and fed them with Indian corn, and now behold, a family! They are his children, those fowls, and he takes as much care of them as I do of you."

"I would like to go up and see them, and get some of the *garofoli*," Giannella replied wistfully. "Zia Mariuccia, do take me up to Fra Tommaso's *loggia*."

"What an idea!" Mariuccia exclaimed. "Why, no woman has ever entered that house. It is strict



clausura. Only men can go in — the Fathers and their pupils live there. They do not want to see little girls!”

“Are they like the Signor Professore then?” Giannella asked, looking across at the tall conventual building with a shiver of fear. “Is the Signor Professore a padre too?”

“No,” said Mariuccia, looking down at the child in amusement. Then she added impressively, “He is a most learned gentleman, and for that reason dislikes noise and disturbance. He was very angry when you knocked over the chair yesterday. You must be more careful, Giannella.”

To Mariuccia’s amazement the child flung herself against her and broke out into wild entreaty. “Zia Mariuccia, do please take me back to Mamma Candida! It makes me so sad to be so quiet all the time. Mamma Candida never scolded about the noise unless there was quarreling — and I want Annetta and Richetto and the dog and the pigs and the donkey — so much! Oh, do take me back!” Her little mouth was quivering with earnestness and her eyes were brimming with tears which she kept back bravely. The loneliness and confinement of the dull apartment, the terror of the padrone, and Mariuccia’s silent, undemonstrative ways, were becoming more than the child could bear. Her heart was breaking for the cheery, populous house in the olive orchard, where something was always happening, where out-of-doors freedom and a tribe of chil-



dren and animals provided playground and playmates day in, day out.

Her cry brought pain to the staunch heart of the woman. She had not realized that the child could be unhappy while she herself was straining every nerve to assure her welfare. Then, with a sigh, she accepted the fact. Of course it was dull and sad for the little thing here. Who was she, old Mariuccia, to take the place of busy, smiling Candida, of the laughing, chattering boys and girls who had been as brothers and sisters to Giannella? She remembered that even as a grown woman, a confirmed spinster of twenty, she had wept some bitter tears when she realized that she had left her "paese," with all its friendliness and freedom, to live shut up in narrow rooms in the city among strangers. So she sat down and took Giannella on her knee and spoke with unusual gentleness.

"Listen, *cocca mia*. It is not possible to take you back to Mamma Candida any more, to stay, though if you are good you shall go to see her some day. You know you are a signorina, and your poor papa of good memory would not have wished you to be brought up as a *contadina*. The good God has caused each one to be born in the position where he can best save his soul. Annetta and Richetto and the others must work among the olives and the grapes, and take care of the animals — that is their destiny, and they will be happy, but it is not yours. You must go to school and learn to read and write, and keep your hands clean for fine embroidery and other



things that ladies may work at. And I think soon you will go to a beautiful school where there are most instructed nuns who will teach you all this, and also many other children of your own age with whom you can play and study. Thus you will be happy, and by-and-by —”

“Yes, by-and-by? Oh, please go on!” Giannella exclaimed, her eyes shining at the prospect suddenly unfolded to her.

Mariuccia looked up at the blue Roman sky, so near and kind in the clearness of noonday. Yes, by-and-by? What possible future lay before the forsaken child for whom she was so obstinately preserving the privileges of gentle birth? “By-and-by? Hé Giannella, I must not tell you everything at once. Arciprete!” as the midday gun boomed its signal from Sant’ Angelo and every bell in the city began to ring. “Run and lay the cloth for the padrone while I get the soup and the bollito off the fire. Poveretta me, the soup is like water. But if that blessed man will only let me buy half-a-pound of meat for it, what am I to do? To think that a man of his instruction can stay hungry with his pockets full of money. What a vice is avarice! Libera nos Domine!”

Mariuccia need really not have prayed against that temptation, though she had often gone hungry of late when there were still a few coppers in the corner of her handkerchief. La Giannella had a fine appetite — and at that age who could have let the child remain unsatisfied?

Another week passed, and when Signora Dati came



to say that on the following day Mariuccia was to bring Giannella to kiss the hand of the Princess, after which she herself would conduct her to a convent of Sisters of Charity on the other side of the river, where the little girl would be received as a boarder, and would have every benefit of education, as well as fine air. The convent, she explained, was really a villa, and the Sisters the kindest and best of instructors. Mariuccia was too overjoyed to speak, until she remembered that for such a school a certain outfit would be necessary; but Signora Dati informed her that the Excellency, out of her great kindness of heart, had provided for this, and that Mariuccia must repay her in prayers for her intentions, and Giannella, the chief beneficiary, by the same, coupled with model conduct and great application to her studies. They were to come to the Princess's apartment at ten o'clock punctually.

So the next morning Mariuccia, leading Giannella by the hand, was met by Signora Dati and conducted through a long series of somberly gorgeous rooms, such as she had never entered in her life, and finally ushered into the presence of her illustrious patroness. The Princess was still a comparatively young woman, tall and graceful, with a calm, thoughtful face, on which her responsibilities had impressed something like austerity. The weight of her guardianship to Onorato, heir to the great Santafede estates, had come upon her so early as to tinge her incompletely developed character with melancholy, loyally combated by religious principle, it is true, yet potent



enough to make her a somewhat exigent and depressing parent for her light-hearted son. Naturally inclined to piety, she had come to feel that only by multiplying good works, by denying herself many little pleasures and luxuries in order to respond to every genuine appeal, could she obtain from Heaven the treasure she coveted, sanctification for her son's soul, happiness and prosperity for his material life. She was even now trying to light on the right wife for him, having already reached the point of overstrained conscientiousness which unconsciously treats Providence as the weaker party to an alliance, a party who will not move a step without powerful co-operation. All this was a little morbid, and might in the end endanger both her own happiness and that of Onorato, but meanwhile was an active agent for good in the affairs of obscure and oppressed people, notably, at this moment, those of Giannella Brockmann and her one friend, Mariuccia Botti.

Giannella was big-eyed with awe when she was led to where the Princess was sitting at a writing-table covered with account-books and works of devotion. On entering the dim and splendid rooms the child had felt inclined to make the sign of the cross and go down on her knees; the space and silence and crimson hangings seemed necessarily to belong to a church. The Princess looked at her without speaking for a moment. Giannella was so pretty, so wholesome and sweet in appearance, that Teresa Santafede experienced a passing regret that she had been denied



a little daughter to brighten her lonely life. But this weakly human sentiment was at once suppressed, and when Giannella had kissed her hand the Princess made her a stereotyped speech on the moral advantages she was about to enjoy and the obligation to make the most of them by obedience and zeal. Giannella did not understand more than half of it, but she felt that something very important was happening, and when the Excellency gave her a rosary of white beads, with a very bright silver medal, her eyes danced with pleasure. This wonderful lady seemed as kind as the Madonna and as rich as the Befana, the beneficent witch who walks over the roofs at Epiphany and brings presents to good children.

Then Mariuccia was allowed to express her thanks, which she did very eloquently, and without any shyness at all, feeling more at home in the presence of a Cestaldini, one of the rulers of her clan, than she had ever felt since she left the fortress of all her traditions in the hills. The Princess asked one or two questions which showed that she remembered the family; the hand-kissing was repeated; Signora Dati received some murmured instructions, and the audience was over. Five minutes later Mariuccia stood under the porte cochère and watched Giannella being put into the closed carriage by Signora Dati. There was a glimpse of the round little face and the golden hair behind the glass, the carriage rumbled out, and Mariuccia turned to climb the four flights of stairs to the Professor's apartment. There she applied her-



self rather vindictively to her work, wondering why the granting of her dearest wish should result in making her feel so cross and lonely.

It was not until three weeks later that Signor Bianchi discovered Giannella's absence. He could not find a certain copy of *The Archæological Review* and called Mariuccia to look for it, remarking with asperity, "That is what comes of having a child running about the house. You will have to send the little nuisance away if this happens again. Of course she has taken it."

"Signor Professore," said Mariuccia, facing him with square shoulders and a terrific frown, "it is you who are a child. But no, an infant in arms has eyes and ears—you, man of a thousand learnings, are becoming blind and deaf. Giannella left the house three weeks ago. The 'lustrissima Principessa has sent her to a fine school—and may every benediction be hers for her charity. You say the coffee is like water. Mamma mia, I had to put the last of my own into it to give it a color at all. Yours was finished yesterday, and you would not give me the money to buy any more. Now then, here is your purse—in the pocket of your paletot—I must have two pauls at once, or you will get no supper to-night. Come, padroncino, be good. You frighten me—you consume before my eyes. There, I bring you cheese and dried figs. They have cost you nothing—my brother sent them—eat, and I will find your blessed paper for you."

Giannella was gone; the brief enchanting reign of



her sunny little presence in the dingy apartment was over; and Mariuccia's other child, the owlsh old young man who did not know how to take care of himself, was once more received into grace. She had to mother something.



## CHAPTER VI

**I**N the sun-flooded gardens and airy rooms of the convent across the river nine radiant years of Giannella's childhood and girlhood slipped happily away. The round of lessons and play, the cycle of workdays and feastdays brought constant interest and variety, and the companionship of children of her own age, passing from class to class with her in the emulation which involved no rivalry or contention, satisfied all the wants of her heart. The nuns were as kind as Mamma Candida, though they inspired a profound respect and an unquestioning awe for their ever-just rulings. There were pets to care for, flowers to tend, beautiful little shrines to decorate them with if one had been very good. All this was consciously enjoyed; less understood, but of lasting importance was the religious training which gathered the little comrades into companies first under the white badge of the Guardian Angels — this for the youngest of all; then, at the time of First Communion, under the green one of St. Joseph; and finally, when the hour was approaching for grown girls to return to their homes in the world and take up the whole duty of women, hung round their necks the coveted blue ribbon and silver medal which marked their worthiness to be enrolled among the "Enfants de Marie." These influences gave a deep stability to Giannella's



healthy normal character, and laid in her heart the foundations of peace and right-thinking for which she was to be deeply thankful later on.

Once or twice in the year Mariuccia was allowed to come early in the morning and take Giannella home for a day, bringing her back before Ave Marie; and whenever it was possible she made time to go to the convent, bearing some humble offering of fruits and cakes from the castello for the "Suore," and satisfy herself that the child was well and happy. The Princess came at stated periods, notably at the great Feasts, when prizes were distributed and wonderful little plays representing religious allegories were got up and acted — with what throbbing excitement — by the best and whitest lambs in the flock, those who had had no bad marks since the last great event of the kind. Since virtue, and not dramatic talent, was the test of proficiency, the good nuns had to work hard over these entertainments, but the result was always satisfactory to them and their troupe, and was believed to afford the highest artistic pleasure to the noble patronesses, of whom Princess Santa-fede was the most distinguished.

The Sisters kept open school for all the poorer children of the quarter, but this part of their establishment was divided from that devoted to the boarders by a twenty-foot wall, and no taint of the streets was ever wafted across that impassable barrier. Within the charmed circle, the girls, all of the better middle class, were as jealously guarded, as well taught, and fed, and housed, as Teresa Santafede her-



self had been in the aristocratic seclusion of her own convent school, where only the daughters of nobles were received. The one difference was that at Santa Eulalia less time was given to books and more to fine needlework and embroidery, the only accomplishments by which in those prehistoric days a refined woman in moderate circumstances could earn a living. There were no lay schools for girls, so there were no openings for teachers except as unpaid assistants to the nuns, who employed some half dozen of their old pupils, homeless orphans like Giannella, to help with the younger children. The Superior confided to the Princess that she would gladly keep Giannella in that capacity, her exquisite needlework and talent for design making her a valuable help in the embroidery department. But the Princess replied that the girl had received special training in these subjects because there was a person — the woman who occasionally came to see her — who had made great sacrifices on her behalf and for whom she could now, at sixteen, do something in return. She could earn money at home; there seemed to be no difficulty about her residing with Mariuccia Botti under Signor Bianchi's roof — and work could always be obtained for her there.

It was with great regret that Giannella left this, her second home, to return to the Professor's apartment in the Palazzo Santafede. Yet she was glad that the moment had come when she could begin to repay the untiring goodness which had saved her from the hard and lonely fate of the forsaken child



and procured for her the education which in time would enable her to earn her living in retirement and peace. No anxieties for the future whispered trouble to her heart. Mariuccia would be ever at her side; and in the background was the beneficent Princess, always accessible through kind Signora Dati, promising that materials and sales should not fail for the beautiful work which the girl really loved. So, after tearful partings with teachers and companions, Giannella was fetched home, her little box full of naïf farewell presents of pictures of Saints, tiny pincushions, muslin bags stuffed with "gagia" blossoms and verbena leaves which would keep their sweet scent for twenty years to come — artificial flowers and embroidered handkerchiefs — all her inestimably precious, and quite valueless, earthly possessions.

Mariuccia told her to bestow these in a small empty room beyond the kitchen, where she could set up her embroidery frame close to the big window which looked more to the sky than to the street, and where she could keep her delicate work free from all danger of dust or accident. As for sleeping alone, that was out of the question. Giannella had never tried it in her life and was sure she should never close an eye, accustomed as she was to the big dormitory with its rows of white beds and the curtained sanctuary in the corner, where the guardian nun was supposed to lie awake saying her prayers all night, listening for the first sound of whispering or larking, to issue forth with dire retribution for the offenders. Mariuccia had made full preparation for her Giannella in her



own room, a windowless apartment on the dark side of the passage. In it had stood for years a spindle-legged green bed of impaired constitution, replaced, with much grumbling from the padrone, by a stronger one when Mariuccia's wooden weight had three separate times broken through it with a thump on the bricks in the dead of night, causing the Professor to start from his slumbers in such a fright that his nurse and guardian had to administer a sedative and keep him on soup for two days to restore his nerves. The green wreck was to have been sold at once, but just then a thrilling discovery of new antiquities in the Foro Romano came to carry Signor Bianchi's mind beyond the confines of personal subjects, and he had been guilty of the frantic extravagance of forgetting to sell the bed. Mariuccia pushed it into a corner behind the door, and had coaxed the carpenter retainer, who had his workshop in a far recess of the colonnade, and who was forever engaged in repairing some of the hundreds of doors and windows in the vast building, to set the wreck safely on its legs again. One of her own two mattresses was stuffed with fresh cornhusks smelling of the country and brought by the carrettiere ally, and behold a nice white couch, quite fit for a "signorina" like Mariuccia's Giannella.

This time no permission was asked of Carlo Bianchi for her reception; the chains of servitude had changed places in the many years of Mariuccia's abode under his roof and were now firmly riveted on the unconscious man, who grumbled freely when things annoyed him, but was too much afraid of losing his economi-



cal housekeeper ever to really quarrel with that grim but faithful domestic tyrant.

So he only nodded in acquiescence when she told him that Giannella had come home — to stay. Giannella herself appeared a moment later, intent upon making her courtesy, inquiring after his respectable health, and thanking him for the permission to remain in his house. The fine gradations of social conditions had been carefully taught her by the nuns. Since she had neither father nor uncles, there was no occasion for her ever to kiss the hand of any gentleman, unless he were an ecclesiastic. Otherwise this honor was to be paid only to women, her superiors either in rank, like the Princess and the other patronesses of the convent, or in age and virtue, like her teachers, Signora Dati, and above all the good Sora Mariuccia, who had done so much for her. How much, the Sisters did not quite know, but Giannella did. Signora Dati had considered it right to make her understand the obligations under which she lay to the unlettered, silent peasant woman who would never refer to them herself; and Giannella, though still remembering “Mamma Candida” with warmer affection, meant to love and cherish “Zia Mariuccia” (as she had learned to call her when among the latter’s real nephews and nieces) all her life. But Mariuccia recoiled in horror when Giannella attempted to kiss her hand. A young lady — the daughter of her poor master of good memory? Dove mia? No indeed. Nor was she to call her “Aunt” any longer, now that she was grown up. People must never be



led to believe that any relationship existed between the "signorina" and her humble self. She was already busy with Giannella's future and had decided that some splendidly disinterested young man, of much "educazione" and large fortune — fifty thousand scudi at least — was to ask her in marriage at the proper time, which apparently came later for persons of her class than for the country folk, who reckoned sixteen the correct age for taking a husband and twenty the end of all chances in that direction.

It was with real pride that she watched Giannella's dignified little greeting to the Professor and marked the expression of bewilderment which came over his features as he turned and saw the new inmate of his family standing in the doorway of the study. He failed for the moment to connect the apparition with the child who had so incensed him by knocking down chairs nine years before. That criminal had been effaced from his memory for a long time, but was slowly recalled as he gazed at the graceful girl whose deep gray eyes were full of intelligent recollection of him. She had grown tall and straight, her features were delicately aquiline, giving an impression of maturity in spite of the dimple at the corner of her grave, fresh mouth; her faintly rosy skin was translucent with health and vitality, and her hair was still of the pure baby gold which had so delighted the hearts of Mariuccia and Candida in the old days. Now it framed in her pretty face in broad, shining braids hanging low before the ears, after the fashion of the day, and gathered into coils at the back. The



convent uniform had been laid aside and Giannella was feeling strangely grand in the dark blue dress (touching the ground at last) which she had made for herself, under the direction of the nuns, for her first entrance into the great world. Many earnest warnings against that world's distractions and dissipations had accompanied the making of the dangerously secular garment, in reality so rigid in its simplicity that but for the finely embroidered collar and undersleeves it might have passed for a modification of a religious habit. The kind nuns had sighed in secret over Giannella's hair, the crown of glory which must attract attention in church and street. "Poverina, she is too pretty. That hair is only fit for a Saint in a picture," they would tell each other, "and the world is not the place for it. But there, Our Lady will protect her, and she has good, pious friends, thank Heaven."

The Professor, who was a gentleman, for all his abstracted ways, rose from his chair and bowed to the charming vision, saying something which was meant to be extremely polite. The vision courtesied again and disappeared; Mariuccia followed, closing the door behind her with a joyful snap; and Carlo Bianchi went back to his book, but for at least five minutes did not understand a word of the treatise on African marbles which had so enthralled him earlier. Who was this girl? Where had she come from? What on earth was she doing in his house, in his kitchen, as the companion of that tough old war-horse, Mariuccia from the Castel? He tried to piece



together the few facts which Mariuccia had told him about her in the dim past. None of them quite accounted for her as he had beheld her just now, and at last he gave the question up, deciding that "Giannella" (that seemed to be her only name) was a problem which he would waste valuable time in trying to solve.

And the Professor, who knew less about her than anyone else, had catalogued Giannella rightly. She was a problem. What future lay before her when she should have read through the odd dozen of gaudily bound prize books that she had brought back from the convent, when she should have exhausted the delights of embroidering Church vestments and bridal trousseaux, the persons most interested in her welfare, with the one exception of Mariuccia, who, loving much, believed all things, would have found it hard to say. After all, that was scarcely their affair. If her fresh youth was destined to burn itself out over the embroidery frame in the bare little room beyond the kitchen, and her bright eyes to grow dim over invisible stitches in gossamer cambric — well, that was destiny's business. They had done what they could.

Giannella herself was not concerned with her future, but she soon came to realize that the present was anything but cheering. The silent house, the confined life, the absence of young companionship, all struck as coldly at her heart now as it had nine years before when she had flung herself into Mariuccia's arms and entreated to be taken back to Mamma



Candida and the pigs and the donkey. After the breezy, healthy existence at the convent, lighted by a thousand interests and shared by numberless bosom friends with whom she had grown up, it was torturing to sit for hours over the work which had been made so pleasant by talk and variety over there at Santa Eulalia, to have only Mariuccia, ever kind but so unresponsive, as a companion; to see the sunshine through her window and watch the cloudlets chasing across the blue in the breeze, and know that she was a prisoner except for a short walk with Mariuccia in the morning, first to Mass at San Severino and then to the near shops where they did their marketing. Even when work was to be returned to Signora Dati and materials for more brought back, Mariuccia must accompany her, for no girl of her age could cross the threshold of her home alone, much less run the gauntlet of the grooms hanging round the stables and the posse of footmen in the Princess's antechamber. How different from the liberty she had enjoyed in the sunswept gardens of the school beyond the river. But the teachings received there, and a certain strain of courage and hardihood derived from her northern ancestry, helped her to shake off her growing depression and show a cheerful face to life, whatever privations it might choose to bring.

The periodical visits to Signora Dati in the great apartment on the other side of the courtyard became a distinct interest and pleasure. They gave her a glimpse into a large, majestic mode of life which had



its own romance; and though "romance" was a word Giannella had scarcely heard, its glamor warmed and lighted her imagination and brought her much wordless consolation; for romance is the very sap of the tree of youth and finds its own sustenance without external help or guidance. Since Don Onorato had really grown up a certain element of color and change had crept into the over-ascetic atmosphere of his mother's surroundings. Her brother, the Cardinal, had done much to effect this, both openly, by representing that the lad should find brightness and sympathy with his young tastes in his home, and also more subtly, by bringing fresh books, travels, essays, even good novels, always with the plea that they might amuse Onorato and keep him from wasting his time on inferior literature. As the Princess still felt it her duty to read anything she recommended to her son, the Cardinal's contributions helped her to pass many pleasant hours and also to enlarge her views in many directions. When, according to her custom, she visited Onorato's rooms to see that all was right there, she would carry off any suspicious-looking volume and leave something better in its place, and though Onorato was a grown man by this time, his awe of her prevented his ever protesting against these exchanges. As time went on he learned to put away the attractively scandalous French novels which were occasionally smuggled into the city in spite of the tyrannical censorship which examined every atom of print that was put into the post or set in circulation, ruthlessly burned all immoral works



or indecent pictures, and aroused the anger of free-born foreigners by cutting out of the newspapers all scandalous or revolutionary items. Sad days of bigotry and darkness, when evil was stamped out as thoroughly as organization and power would permit — when any woman, from a foreign peeress to a dancer at the opera, was sent across the frontier the moment her behavior overstepped the bounds of propriety. If well-brought-up young men went wrong, they had at least to take some trouble to accomplish it.



## CHAPTER VII

**I**T was ten o'clock in the morning and Giannella was waiting alone in the second anteroom for the advent of Signora Dati. Mariuccia, after also waiting a little, had left her, saying she would return in half-an-hour to fetch her; meanwhile there was work to do at home, and she was loth to waste any more time. At the end of a few months of her new life, waiting had become a familiar trial to Giannella. She often had to sit for a couple of hours in Signora Dati's room while the Princess's lieutenant interviewed the numberless clients and employees of the family, attended to the commands of the Excellency, inspected the mountains of linen in the "guarda roba," and kept an eye on the maids, all of whom were under her supervision and kept entirely apart, in employment, housing, and feeding, from the men-servants, for whom Ferretti, the maestro di casa, was alone responsible. When Signora Dati knew that some time must elapse before she could speak to Giannella, the latter was brought at once to her room, there to occupy herself as best she might until her turn came. When the moment at last arrived the pale little lady would glide in, sink into a chair with a half-suppressed sigh of intense fatigue, and then throw herself gallantly into the matter in hand with as much energy as if it had been the first task of her day.



Each question that came up was gone into thoroughly — whether the passion-flowers on the violet chasuble should be picked out with crystal or amethyst beads; whether the web of beauty which was to be the wedding handkerchief of Donna Laura Bracciano, the Princess's niece, should have square or rounded corners; whether the coarse but ample layettes piled up in the left-hand cupboard, for the Foundling Hospital had better be counted over once again to make sure that each was complete? In all these handiworks Giannella was employed as best suited the needs of the moment, and nothing connected with them seemed too infinitesimal for Signora Dati's profound consideration. Giannella, who took her instructions day after day, conceived a deep admiration for the character of the dignified but self-effacing subordinate, who was often white to the lips with weariness but who never neglected one of the thousand minutiae of her overlapping responsibilities.

On this particular morning a treat was in store for Giannella. After Mariuccia's departure word had come that Signora Dati was obliged to go out and would take the "ricamatrice" (embroideress) with her. She would join her in the sala in a few minutes. After receiving the message Giannella sat tingling with pleasant excitement at the prospect before her and ready to jump up the moment Signora Dati should appear. The door opened suddenly and she ran forward with a smile of greeting, ran almost into the arms of a young man who seemed to be choking with laughter — Onorato, fresh from a long



maternal lecture on the sin and folly of owning too many expensive horses. He stopped half way and just saved Giannella, crimson and rooted to the spot with embarrassment, from impact with his singularly radiant waistcoat. She knew at once who he was; only the son of the house would venture to race through it in that fashion. But he, surprised for once out of his manners, stared at her, took in the charming face with its arrested smile, appraised the Etruscan gold of the hair under its light lace covering, found time to wonder who the girl was and why she had seemed so pleased and then so distressed at seeing him; then, with a word of apology, he passed out of the room, much more sedately than he had entered it. Giannella, conscious of having made an unpardonable mistake in thus thrusting herself into his path, sank back into her seat, pale and trembling. What would Signora Dati say?

Signora Dati, coming upon the scene a moment later, and receiving Giannella's almost tearful apology for her stupidity, smiled away her anxieties at once. The Prince would not be offended — oh dear no. He was most amiable and simple; it might have happened to anybody; it was his fault, not Giannella's. He always rushed about the house in a hurry, knocking things down sometimes as he dashed through the rooms. He was still such a boy! Signora Dati smiled with the incorrigible indulgence of middle-aged spinsterhood for impetuous young masculinity. Yes, Giannella might set her mind at rest, the Prince would certainly have forgotten all about her before he was



half way down the stairs. Had she brought the patterns with her? Here they were at Massoni's, and now for the white velvet for Donna Laura's wedding dress. Oh, Giannella would have to treat the material like melting sugar when she embroidered it. A breath, a speck of dust — and irretrievable ruin would follow. Yes, please Sora Luisa, her Excellency had selected the pattern, and now it must be seen in the piece, in a good light.

The magnificent material was reverently unrolled and spread out in snowy, sumptuous billows in the sunshine. Signora Dati examined it with the gravity of the expert, and Giannella stood by, trying to find the answer to the first disquieting question that had ever presented itself to her mind. What mysterious ruling caused one girl to be born Donna Laura Bracciano, clothed her in robes beautiful enough for an angel, bestowed upon her at seventeen the dignity of espousing a young man as fortunate as herself, amid the rejoicings and congratulations of hundreds of friends — and decided that Giannella Brockmann, without a relation of her own in the world, was to be a dependent on charity, working in a lonely room for ten hours a day to pay charity's account? There was no rebellion in her thoughts as she meditated on the problem, only wonder, and a strange new sense of bereavement — the unconscious hunger for something young and sweet to love and laugh with, the reaching out of the plant in the shade to its comrades tossing their heads in the sun.

The encounter with Don Onorato, the light-hearted



heir to accumulated honors and wealth, the catching mirth that seemed bubbling over in his laugh, in his bright face, had shaken her peace in some way, had, as it were, blown aside the gray veil which closed in her own existence, and shown her in a flash all that lay outside of it — for others. And now the pictured vision of the radiant bride on whose finery she must work till her back ached and her eyes smarted, had driven home the sense of privation like a sword. The keenest pain of it all lay in the fact that the few denizens of her tiny world took her fate as a settled question, a matter of course, and considered that she ought to be enthusiastically grateful for it. Ah, she was grateful, yes indeed, she appreciated all that had been done for her by kind human beings; but if they, on whom she had no claim, were so good and generous, could not the Giver of all good things have been a little open-handed too? It all seemed strange and sad, and Divine love just a little less loving than she had been taught to believe.

During the next two or three weeks Giannella had several glimpses of Onorato Santafede. Once she and Mariuccia met him on the great staircase; twice he burst into Signora Dati's room when she was sitting there receiving instructions about the design of orange blossoms and roses to be embroidered in silver on the grand white velvet dress. Signora Dati smiled at the young gentleman, attended to his imperious commands about some silk handkerchiefs which he declared had been vilely mishandled by the laundrymaids, and seemed totally unconscious that



the true object of his visit was to have another look at the young embroideress, who stood silently aside and never opened her lips during his laughing colloquy with the domestic oracle of the household. No nascent romance had caught him in its web; Onorato was as free from romance as most young Romans of his class, which, whatever its failings, has rarely loved out of its sphere and in which a *mésalliance* is practically a thing unknown. But he frankly admired beauty, and enjoyed looking at Giannella as he would have enjoyed contemplating a charming and rather strange picture. He had discovered that she was the official embroideress for the family, that she was often in the house, and he saw no reason for not taking advantage of the facts to pass a pleasant moment or two in her presence. The instant he entered the room, Giannella seemed relegated to Limbo by its mistress. She simply did not exist until Onorato had departed. And he was in the habit of lingering there sometimes, for it was the room to which he had been accustomed to come all his life, first with childish joys and sorrows, afterwards with his little fastidiousnesses about wardrobe and service; and often, since he was a kind-hearted young autocrat, to cheer up "that victim of piety and recluse of duty," as he called Signora Dati, with some bit of fun and mischief.

But the perspicacious little lady, while smiling at his extravagances, noted that his eyes rested long on the golden head and half-averted face near the window, and she decided that under no circumstances



must he find Giannella there again. Who could tell what evil snare the devil (whose frantic machinations Signora Dati saw in every departure from the established order of things) might not weave around two young people who saw each other continually, even if no word passed between them? She would say nothing to the Princess, but in future Giannella should only come when she was sent for, and that would be when Onorato was safely out of the house. He probably did not know that she lived just across the courtyard, for he was never up in time to see her go out with Mariuccia. All would be well, and the Excellency, who had so much on her noble mind, need never even hear of her faithful acolyte's passing anxiety.

And all would have been well had not Onorato, who took a profane delight in exploiting his solemn mother's complete lack of humor, come in that evening to take his place at table with a long face and some heavy sighs. To the Princess's anxious questions he replied that he was not ill, but that a strange melancholy had come over him. He believed — mamma must keep his secret — he really believed he had fallen in love! There!

Mamma gave a cry like a soul in pain, and then braced herself for the worst. Onorato had been singularly stubborn in the matter of taking a wife and to all his mother's entreaties had replied that life was very pleasant now, that no one could say what marriage would make of it, and finally that when mamma found a woman as charming as herself to



propose to him he would think about it — not till then. Thus placated, the Princess would hold her peace for a while, but Heaven was daily stormed with prayers for the ideal daughter-in-law. Consternation and hope divided her feelings at this sudden announcement. Unaided, unguided — was it yet possible that her son's choice had fallen on some really desirable maiden? With clasped hands she entreated him to speak, she could bear the suspense no longer.

Then the young rascal, with much sham hesitation and contrition, confessed that his heart was gone from him forever — into the keeping of the exquisitely beautiful creature who embroidered the family arms on the sheets and towels! The Princess sank back in her chair, white with the shock. This was the most dreadful thing that could have happened. "My son," she gasped, "do you know what you are saying? But this is perfectly horrible. I cannot believe it."

"I never meant you to, you dear, solemn, innocent mamma," he cried, laughing as he jumped up and came to throw his arms round her neck and kiss her — he was very much of a child for all his twenty-eight years — "I was only joking. Don't you understand? When I fall in love — oh then there really will be trouble, for I intend to devote my whole attention to the accomplishment. But now — no. There mamma mia cara, smile again. Your little embroideress is as pretty as an angel, but I am not going to make a fool of myself by losing my heart to her.



Come, let us find her a husband. Wouldn't you like to marry her to Ferretti? They say he is looking out for a second wife."

The Princess rallied her courage with a heroic effort and pretended to believe him. Calling up a strained smile, she said, "These are not proper subjects for joking, my son. Marriage is a sacrament, matrimony a holy state into which I trust you will enter with fitting dispositions when the time comes. You are quite old enough, you know I was thinking —"

"For the love of Heaven," cried Onorato, terrified in his turn, "don't 'think,' I conjure you, don't think. You promised not to speak again on that subject for at least six months. As for fitting dispositions, I have not the first symptom of the disease at present and cannot imagine where I shall find them when the fatal moment arrives. If Churchmen could drive fast horses I assure you I could more easily catch the distemper called a vocation. Uncle Paolo was a wise man and he strikes me as a very happy one."

"Your uncle had two elder brothers when he decided to enter the Church," the Princess replied. "It pleased God to remove them before either of them was married — a great misfortune. Pray speak of these subjects with proper respect, Onorato."

"I will respect everything — so long as it leaves me alone," he said rather crossly. Really dear mamma made every word he spoke the occasion for a lecture. What would become of him if there were another woman in the house doing the same? He saluted her abruptly and went away to his own rooms.



It was a long time before he caught sight of Giannella again. By eight o'clock the next morning a note was brought to her from Signora Dati, stating that there was much going on in the house at present, and that the Excellency had intimated that it would be more convenient for her to have the work sent across to the Professor's apartment, where the writer would call in person on Tuesdays and Saturdays to inspect its progress. Giannella need not come to the piano nobile in future.

So the last door was shut on her prison, doubtless, as she told herself, through some misdemeanor of her own. Tears welled up in her eyes. Life meant to be cruel. For the first time a little line marked itself between her brows and the fresh curves of her mouth closed in a straight line. Then she dried her eyes angrily and sat down to the embroidery frame where the silver orange blossoms on Donna Laura's wedding dress were beginning to cover the material with regal splendor of bloom.



## CHAPTER VIII

SAN SEVERINO, as you pass under the portico of its front entrance, appears to be very much like other Roman churches, spacious, marble-floored, roofed with frescoed cupola and rounded arches; its wide nave is flanked with chapels, some unowned and bare; others, the vested property of great families, gorgeously or artistically decorated, marking to the experienced eye the precise date of each family's apogee of power — pure pre-Raphaelite, Renaissance, Barocco, First Empire sham classic, Gregory the Sixteenth tawdry stucco and color. Even the latest abomination, however, is chastened into harmony by the merciful siftings of years, by the ever-lessening light which struggles through the darkened yellow of windows set too high in dome and walls to be meddled with more than once or twice in a century. When the sun strikes them, long swathes of dusty gold shoot transversely down the unpeopled spaces of the church touching the mote-laden air to slow vibrations of light, calling back to a mockery of life some periwigged or pseudo-classic bust on a monument, or lingering on the lovely, flower-tinted lines of a Renaissance tomb. It is Rome in the church as elsewhere, Rome, superbly indifferent to the quality of the spoils Time chooses to fling in her lap, because she has but to let them lie there awhile in the supernal alembic



of her glory-haunted air, to have them subdued, ripened, enriched, and finally incorporated into her own stricken yet transcendent beauty.

Out of the last chapel to the right of the High Altar of San Severino a low swing door gives access to a darker, dimmer sanctuary, formerly a choir, as the blackened stalls and lecterns testify, but now used only once a month for the meeting of the Sodality of the Bona Mors. An unlit altar rises against one wall, supporting a painting always curtained from the dampness save when the doors are closed to the public and the members congregate for their exercises. Only a few can tell what the picture represents — whether Saint Joseph breathes his last sigh in the arms of God Incarnate, or the Penitent Thief writhes on his cross beside the King of the Jews. “Morte certa, modo incerto,” the veiled shrine seems to whisper, and something cold and deathly in the air brings the first axiom at least shudderingly home to those who pass through.

Beyond this chapel lies a small irregular chamber, its walls and pavement of marble so darkened with age that it is hard to decipher the inscriptions with which both are covered, brief Latin epitaphs recording the names of the dead who lie in the crypt below, good monks of an order which once prayed in the little chapel of the Bona Mors and has been superseded and absorbed in the course of centuries, even as its modest temple has been absorbed and dominated by the great church of San Severino.

A heavy leather curtain hangs over the outer door



of the marble chamber of epitaphs, and is lifted for those who pass in and out by courteous mendicants of a more retiring disposition than those who guard the grand portico. A long, narrow courtyard, high walled but pleasantly open to the sky, and ornamented with a fountain made out of an acanthus capital, marks the final limits of the sacred premises, which run, from the Ripetta, parallel with the Santafede palace, through the entire block to the piazza of that name. The palace has its imposing front on the piazza, but the back door of San Severino leads into an obscure street opening out of the square. The street is narrow and crooked, shut in between the side walls of two or three ancient palaces, great houses of diminished splendors, whose owners do not disdain to let the ground floors of these purlieus as livery stables and small shops. Over one dark, malodorous doorway hangs a picture of a fearfully obese cow, sadly contemplating a yellow ochre field under a cracked blue sky, denoting that milk and butter are to be had within. From a cavernous den opposite, an avalanche of vegetables invades the sidewalk, crisp green lettuces, scarlet tomatoes, the magically fragrant fennel, pumpkins like globes of battered gold — the cornucopia of Ceres seems to be shaken out on the worn stones every morning. But Ceres has grown old; she sits, dark-browed, saturnine, wrinkled, on a low chair in the midst of her trophies, knitting stockings. Customers pause, select their purchases, hold up as many fingers as may represent the coppers they suppose them to be worth, and look



inquiringly at Ceres. She bends a frowning glance on the questioner; if the guess be right, she nods her head; if mistaken, she corrects it by the same finger language; and the coppers drop into the basket where her ball of yarn dances at her feet. Few venture to bargain with Sora Rosa; she considers it waste of time. People pay and carry away the stuff; or they will not pay, and then somebody else will, for there is no other vegetable stall within ten minutes' walk, and who is going to risk an apoplexy from over-exercise?

In the early morning, great ladies, quietly dressed, glide past Sora Rosa, avoid the horses which are being confidentially curried in the street, and disappear through the low doorway into the court of San Severino on their way to Mass. During the rest of the day the genial squalor of the Via Tresette is not disturbed by any jarring reminder of the prosperity and cleanliness of neighboring quarters. Near the ground at any rate all is dark, promiscuous, and prehistoric so far as modern ways are concerned. But the monastery building of San Severino rises up and up, a long, irregular pile, reaching the higher air and the sunshine at last, and breaking out into little terraces and balconies, flowery and bird-haunted, where the Fathers whom Fra Tommaso served with such zeal took their rest after the labors of the day. Fra Tommaso's own little loggia, the hanging garden which Giannella had begged to be taken to see so many years ago, was one of these, the least accessible from the larger apartments, but possessing for its



owner the immense advantage of looking directly down into the Via Santafede and commanding a view of a section of the piazza at one end and of the Ripetta at the other; also of some fifty windows of the palace itself. The incorrigible amateur of the human drama, as he climbed from his forum, the church, to his villa, the loggia, always thanked Heaven for having cast his lines in pleasant places, and pitied his immediate opposite neighbors, Mariuccia and Giannella, for being exposed to the distracting temptations and vanities of the world and at the same time deprived of the delights of flower tending and pigeon feeding which he enjoyed on his terrace.

The vanities of the world had only approached Giannella by proxy for a long time past. Since Onorato's chance admiration and his untimely bit of farce had closed the doors of the piano nobile to her, life had become so narrow, so uniform, that she hardly recognized it for life at all. Three colorless years had slipped by; good Signori Dati was dead; the Princess, busy as ever, but in failing health, seemed to have forgotten her former protégé's very existence. The brief churchgoing and shopping with Mariuccia, the needlework by which she still earned small sums from ladies who remembered her address, the assistance rendered in housework and in waiting on the Professor, who, after his first surprise at her presence, never seemed to know whether she or Mariuccia brought him his meals — these made the round of Giannella's days; and since she had, in obedience to the advice of her spiritual director, put rebellion



down and accepted her fate by sheer effort of will, she lacked even the stimulus of conflict with her unnatural destiny. She had not lost either her health or her beauty in the strait abode of frowning circumstance, but her buoyancy seemed gone; her eyes were deep rather than bright, and no gallant resolve to smile on life could keep the corners of her pretty mouth from drooping pathetically out of the happy upward curves of her childhood. That period was so long past that it seemed to belong to life on another planet, one much nearer the sun than this earth; but when, as in piety bound, she made one meditation a month on the joys of paradise, the angels, and the heavenly gardens and the celestial music, slid into the familiar semblance of her friends and play-fellows at Castel Gandolfo, the vineyards and the chestnut woods, the barking of the old dog — the braying of the donkey — Madonna Santissima, what abominable sacrilege were her thoughts committing? Dogs and donkeys in heaven? Those red-cheeked, dusty-legged contadini children as angels of the Lord? Oh, what a wicked girl Giannella Brockmann must be — and what would Padre Anselmo say when she told him?

She had fallen into this grievous sin for the twentieth time one winter afternoon. The light was failing, and as she rose from her seat to put her work away, the door bell, grown terribly decrepit in its advanced age, jangled with an imperious querulousness which announced a stranger. The Professor always handled it with tender care for fear of expense in repairs. Mariuccia, who seemed to have grown suddenly old, came out from the back room groaning



with headache, for which she had applied her favorite remedy of tufts of "madrecara" stuffed up her nostrils. The sight of her thus adorned was one of the few things which still made Giannella shake with laughter; the dear old face resembled a boar's head in a butcher's window at Christmas time.

"Go back to bed, Mariuccia," said the girl, "I will see who it is. The padrone is in his study. I had better ask him if he wishes to see any visitors."

She went quickly down the passage, pausing to put her head in at the study door. The Professor had grown older too, and bent more closely over his book than of yore. Not risking speech, Giannella looked a question as he raised his head; he nodded assent, and then the bell began its crazy dance again. Giannella hastily opened the front door and found herself face to face with a short, rather stout man, whose features she could not discern in the gloom, but who asked in an imperious tone whether the *distintissimo* Professor were at home. At the same time he handed her a card, from which she decided that this must be his first visit to the house.

"Favorisca," she murmured, and the stout gentleman followed her to Bianchi's room. She saw the Professor rise and come forward with a puzzled air, and heard the visitor begin an apology for his intrusion. Then she closed the door on them and went back to the kitchen, not sufficiently interested even to glance at the card, which she dropped on the little table beside the umbrella-stand in the passage.

"Is he never going, then, this cataplasm of a vis-



itor?" exclaimed Mariuccia an hour later. "The padrone's supper is ready and spoiling. Take in the lamp, Giannella. They must be in the dark in there."

When Giannella entered the study, lamp in hand, she found that Bianchi had lighted a candle and was examining some papers, which he laid down quickly on seeing her. His sallow cheeks were flushed, and as he glanced up it struck the girl that his eyes looked unusually bright.

Opposite to him, leaning back in an arm-chair, sat the visitor, whom the light revealed as a youngish man with narrow black eyes and a round countenance, evidently intended for smiles, but disciplined just now into a kind of judicial severity which could not altogether suppress the under element of amusement with which he was regarding his host.

He too glanced quickly up at the girl who stood in the doorway the lamp she carried, illuminating her fair hair and grave young face. After a moment's hesitation she advanced and set the lamp on the table between the two men. Bianchi dropped his hands over the papers and looked across to his guest.

"This is Giannella Brockmann, Signor' Avvocato," he said; "you perceive that she is alive and in good health."

The stranger rose to his feet and seemed about to speak, but the Professor raised a warning hand, and, turning to Giannella, dismissed her with a nod of the head. As she closed the door she heard him say hurriedly, "Later, later. Not at present—it is a nervous temperament."



Her curiosity was aroused from its years of sleep, awakened as by the twang of a bowstring letting an invisible arrow fly past her. Was Bianchi referring to her? What was the communication which the other had wished to make and which he had arrested so peremptorily? She had scarcely had time to formulate the queries in her mind when she heard murmurs of farewells, the sound of the front door closing, and the Professor's footsteps returning to his study, where he locked himself in. It was all very unusual.

She did not see the padrone again that evening, for Mariuccia, still wearing her satyr-like adornment, took the tray from her hands and carried in his supper. The next day, however, Giannella was surprised by his pausing, as he met her in the passage, to return her dutiful "good-morning," a mark of interest which he had never shown before. A little later he actually called her by name and showed her a row of books on a lower shelf, which, he said, required dusting. Mariuccia seemed unwell, and she had much to do; would Giannella undertake to dust the books regularly? He would be much obliged.

When she informed Mariuccia of this order the old woman laughed sardonically. "It has taken him a great many years to find out that I have much to do," she sneered, "and I have waited on him when I was so shaking with fever that the plates rattled in my hands — and he never noticed that I was ill. Cipicchia! That visitor must have been an angel in disguise, to have thus opened the padrone's heart to poor



you and me, Giannella. Let us hope that he will soon come again."

He did come again, two or three times in the course of the next fortnight, and with each visit the Professor's kind notice of Giannella increased, until she began to have an uncomfortable feeling in his hitherto impersonal presence. As she came and went, his eyes followed her with a growing lambency behind the big spectacles. She was called into his room on frivolous pretexts, and one day he asked her if she could kindly cook his supper. Mariuccia had brought in some polpetti, and he had remarked that Giannella cooked polpetti divinely.

Mariuccia's sharp eyes had marked the padrone's new attitude and she was much disquieted. Was it possible that at fifty-seven he was committing the folly of falling in love? And that, suddenly and unreasonably, with the girl who had waited on him for years past without winning so much as a word or a glance of recognition from him? If so, it was nothing but bewitchment, dark bewitchment. The lawyer who came to see him now must be quite the opposite of an angel, since the spell dated from his first visit. The spell had evidently been cast by him.

Well, she would counteract it if she could. Giannella should not go near that fatal sitting-room and its occupant if she could help it. Giannella seconded the precautionary measures with all her might. She was thankful to be spared the attentions which were becoming too obvious to be ignored. Resolutely she stayed at the other end of the house, but Bianchi



took to wandering over there after her. She pondered on the possibility of paying for a place in the vettura and taking refuge with the old friends at Castel Gandolfo; but money was painfully scarce; she and Mariuccia now depended entirely on the latter's wages and on the fifteen baiocchi a day which her generous master had so unwillingly granted when she first came to live with him twenty years before. No, a journey was out of the question; the prison doors could not be pushed ajar.

The door was opening even now, but Giannella had no premonition of it. Having attained the sober age of twenty without possessing a single young acquaintance in Rome (for none of her former schoolfellows lived in that remote quarter), she was allowed by Mariuccia, when the old joints felt stiff, to go out alone sometimes for Mass and marketing. Mariuccia's dreams of a bright future for her foster-child were fading sadly away at last; Giannella would be considered an old maid in another year or two, and the good young man with fifty thousand scudi had never come. Instead, by an ugly "scherzo" of fate, Carlo Bianchi, the shrunken recluse who had never looked at anything more closely resembling a woman than some statue thousands of years old, dead and cold as the creature deserved to be for having been perpetuated in such indecent nudity, Carlo Bianchi was waking up to the fact that a beautiful young woman was a member of his household; and, unless Mariuccia's own shrewdness was at fault, he would soon propose to install her as its mistress.



With all his failings, his domestic tyrant could not credit him with baser intentions, but this was bad enough. If he should succeed — Mariuccia groaned aloud at the possibility — the rest of Giannella's life would be "in Galera," that of a slave at the galleys. Let the poor child get out into the air and sunshine, exchange a word with Fra Tommaso, with stout, smiling Sora Amalia, who lived under the sign of the cow, even with cross old Sora Rosa, who had so far unbent to "la Biondina" as to make her a present of figs or cherries once or twice. It was hard, after all the struggles to keep Giannella a lady, that she should be reduced to friends like these, that not a person of her own class should ever remember or notice her. But there, it was destiny! "Run along, Giannella, and see if ricotta is cheap to-day. The padrone would like some for his breakfast."

So Giannella came and went a little more freely, and she did not attract the attention which the good nuns had dreaded for that dangerous golden hair when they let their dove fly from the convent ark four years before. Everyone in the vicinity knew her by sight, and it was a vicinity whose staid inhabitants rarely changed. The world, the flesh, and the devil, might go roaring up and down the Corso a few blocks away, but within sound of the bells of San Severino all was calm, ancient, safe. Mariuccia's Biondina, as she was called, could come and go, in her dark dress, with the bit of black lace veiling her modest head, and no curious or disrespectful glance would follow her. She could escape from the house and ven-



ture on a little walk by the river, past the palace where kind Cardinal Cestaldini was basking in a rarefied atmosphere of contemplation, good works, and learning, could pass the time of day with Fra Tommaso and the incurables, and linger among the monuments and frescoes of the church or try to decipher the inscriptions in the funereal gallery beyond the chapel of the Bona Mors, all without embarrassment or molestation. And as was natural, the small, new liberty was sweet and reviving to her repressed youth. She saw no tragedy in it, as did Mariuccia, to whom the acknowledgment of Giannella's passing youth and apparently irrevocable spinsterhood was a bitter trial. She was not sure now that in choosing the single state for herself she had not made a big mistake; but then she had chosen it for herself, and that was quite a different thing.

The winter had softened into spring and the spring warmed to summer, when Mariuccia's enemy, the mysterious avvocato, made his last visit to the Professor. He carried an imposing sheaf of papers in his hand and was accompanied by an older man who looked like a notary, for he wore even bigger spectacles than the padrone's and his right forefinger was dyed dark with ink. A few minutes after the two had been admitted, Giannella was summoned to the study. Some very direct questions were put to her by the lawyer, as to her name, age, and recollections of childhood, questions which surprised her greatly, for she could not imagine why these details should interest strangers. Then a paper was laid before her which she



was requested to sign. She drew back, a chill fear coming over her that it might be a marriage contract — that she was being entrapped into a union with Bianchi, who stood beside her, breathing hard with suppressed excitement and considerately holding a sand castor over the page, ready to dry the writing at once. As she hesitated, he touched her arm with his free hand, and the touch spelled compelling will. She was conscious that the other two men were staring at her in bewilderment, and she obeyed — as she had obeyed authority, in one form or another, all her life, and signed her name.

Bianchi instantly took possession of the sheet and handed it to the lawyer, who wrote on it in his turn. Then, as Bianchi signified to Giannella that she might retire, the lawyer came round to her side of the table, shook hands with her, congratulated her on her good fortune, and, with quite a friendly ring in his voice, begged her to consider his services at her disposal in the future. She thanked him, inwardly wondering at his optimism. The only good fortune apparent in her circumstances was the one of having found a shelter and a home — to which she had less future claim than the swallows to their nests in the palace eaves.

Emerging from the study she found Mariuccia hovering near the door, wild with curiosity and suspicion. Giannella described what had taken place, and as soon as the visitors had departed Mariuccia stormed into the study and assailed the Professor with angry questions as to what the child had been made to sign. What was this indecent secrecy? What had anyone



to say to Giannella that she, who had brought her up, might not hear? Was that abominable paper a marriage contract? She would tear it up and light the fire with it. Did he figure to himself that Giannella was to be disposed of without Mariuccia Botti's consent?

Bianchi, who seemed calm and triumphant now, locked the drawer of his secretary and put the key in his pocket before deigning to reply to her tirade; indeed its fluency and fury left no opening for reply until she paused for want of breath, her eyes like coals, her grizzled locks shaking above her brow like angry snakes. The master had never seen her in a passion before, and he shrank back instinctively. Then, as she was opening her lips to speak again, he said quickly and with some dignity, "Calm yourself, Mariuccia. One does not speak to one's padrone in that manner. The paper which Giannella signed was just a legal one, connected with . . . business of mine. You cannot write — it would have been useless to call you in. You perceive that you have made a foolish mistake? Oh, I forgive you. You have had no instruction, and you women of the people are ever illogical and suspicious. As to marriage . . . listen to me, and do not transport yourself with anger — it sours the blood and might bring on an apoplexy which I have so greatly feared for you, overloading yourself with food as you do. Fifteen baiocchi a day for one woman. Holy Æsculapius, how have you survived it for twenty years?"

"Man without eyes, without vitals," cried Mariuccia, "what do you suppose Giannella has lived on since



she came back from the convent? Air? Trevi water? Have I not fed the poor child for years? Have you ever given her a crumb from your table, a sugar-plum at Epiphany, or a maritozzo in Lent? Domine Dio, keep Thy Hand on my head or I shall end by losing patience with this blind and heartless one."

The Professor was roused to reprisals at last. "Do not imagine that I am blind, O female without judgment!" he exclaimed. "Gladly would I have made presents of food to Giannella, though I am a poor man and could ill afford it—but I perceived that your charity to her might be the means of saving your life, preventing you from dying of surfeit—a most painful end. Thus has your good deed already had its reward. But to show you, O ignorant and audacious one, that I have a true affection for Giannella and a mind full of generosity I will now—" He choked, then went on manfully, "I will now give you five baiocchi a day for her board, out of my own pocket. It is imprudent—I shall suffer—but I am resolved. Behold." And he held out five dingy coppers in his half-closed hand.

Then he found out what Mariuccia meant when she spoke of losing patience. She came up to him in two strides and shook both hands in his face. "What?" she screamed, "you want to pay for Giannella now? Why have you never thought of it before? Four years last Easter she came home, and never once have you said, 'Mariuccia mia, there is a paul, to buy something for the girl—what do I know, a cake, a bit of ribbon?' No, she grew up, she has



waited on you and ironed for you and mended your old rags of shirts that only hold together by the grace of God. She has combated with the butcher and the baker and the fishmonger till they had to take something off their prices for you — they fear to see her coming, though she is as beautiful as an angel — and you never even spoke to her till a few weeks ago. But now — the devil in hell alone knows why — you have suddenly found out that she is good and pretty, and you make big eyes at her and call her to dust your wicked old books — and now you have the temerity to offer me money for her! No indeed, *Professore mio*, this you shall never do. Go back to your *Veneres* and *Giunones* — I wonder the Holy Father did not send the shameless females to the galleys for having their portraits taken like that — and leave Giannella to me.”

Bianchi had not listened to this tide of reproaches, accompanied as it was by violently menacing gestures, without taking immediate measures for self-preservation. He edged round the room, keeping his back to the wall and facing Mariuccia, who followed him step by step, never allowing the distance between them to diminish by a handbreadth, until the door was reached. Carefully the Professor put out one hand behind him and ascertained that it was ajar. Then with amazing agility he stepped back into the passage, and from there hurled his last bomb. “You spoke of marriage. Yes, woman of hard head and mountainous ignorance, I intend to marry Giannella.” Then the door was



slammed in Mariuccia's face and the next moment the padrone was flying down the stairs.

His enemy, haggard, and trembling from reaction, remained in possession of the field, but she knew that she was vanquished. When Giannella heard the front door close she ran to the study, whence sounds of battle had rolled for the last half-hour. She found her old friend with her head sunk forward on the table while slow tears trickled through her knotty fingers all over the padrone's papers. The master had evidently been put to flight, but Mariuccia's victory seemed to have been a costly one. She refused to confide to Giannella the subject of her "*piccolo argomento*," as she called it, with Bianchi. The long habit of silence gave her strength to keep her counsel about his alarming proposal. Taken together with his changed attitude towards the girl, it could, in her judgment, point to but one thing, "*passione*," the fatal, sudden, all-devouring passion in which the Roman believes as blindly as did the Greek tragedian. This poisoned arrow had entered the padrone's heart. *Mamma mia*, here was a complication over which to astrologize her poor head! Who was going to sustain the combat, day in day out, under that narrow roof, with an obstinate man who was undoubtedly being smitten in his dried-up middle age with just retribution for the unnatural repressions of his youth, and who, moreover, held all the advantages of the situation, since he was the master of the house? She did not abandon her belief in the spell which she accused



the strange lawyer of weaving around the poor man; no, that was a part of the doom; he was Satan's emissary, permitted, for some inexplicable reason, to sow the seed which had taken such violent possession of the unfortunate Professor. He had disappeared when his evil work was done and it could probably not be undone by anyone else. It was all destiny — but most afflicting.

As for telling Giannella — no. Love was not a proper subject to discuss with young girls, and then, such love as this? So she informed Giannella that she had been asked to sign the mysterious paper as a witness to something or other that had no connection with her, and that the slight disagreement had arisen from Bianchi's irritation at being questioned. Why had she been crying? Oh, she was feeling "strana" that day — it was all the fault of the scirocco.

The Professor returned towards evening, very haughty and dignified. Mariuccio contradicted all her explanations of the morning by forbidding Giannella to go near him, and carried in his supper tray herself, in grim silence more aggressive than words, even those of her rich vocabulary. She was only waiting for the rattle of a plate or the turning of a door handle to put an end to the armistice and serve as a declaration of renewed hostilities, but Bianchi was deaf and dumb. He informed her, when she came in to remove his tray, that he would be going to Ostia the next day; his coffee must be ready and his clothes brushed by seven o'clock. Then he returned to the perusal of a



letter, and Mariuccia, greatly relieved at the prospect of his absence for so many hours, prayed for the intervention of protecting Providence in Giannella's affairs before his return — and sat up till late, brushing his clothes and preparing the frugal lunch which he always carried with him on such archæological expeditions.



## CHAPTER IX

THE morning after these disturbing events an exciting stir delighted the inhabitants of the Via Tresette, the street of the cow. The owner of the dairy had in the course of years become the proprietor of the old house which sheltered his trade; and, having prospered of late, he had built on the roof a new apartment, containing four small rooms and a large airy studio, which he hoped to let to some painter. His neighbors had shaken their heads over this bold speculation, but it seemed that his optimism was justified, for here, at the small door beside the shop, stood a handcart loaded with stiff-legged easels, canvases tied together in a red tablecloth, a chair similarly protected by a green one, the disjointed limbs of an iron bedstead, cooking utensils, and various odds and ends, all of which proved incontestably that a tenant had been found for the appartamento on the roof.

Beside the cart, helping the perspiring facchino to unload the things, stood a young man of cheerful countenance and remarkably dapper costume. Adjuring the porter to move delicately, he unearthed a life-sized mummy-like object swathed in a drab sheet, which he hoisted tenderly on the man's back. Then, turning to the landlord, who stood by, beaming on this visible proof of his own good luck, he begged him, in lan-



guage more elegant than usually echoed through that obscure thoroughfare, to favor him by keeping an eye on the other belongings while he accompanied the bearer of this particular treasure up the stairs.

No sooner had he disappeared than an excited group gathered round the owner of the premises to find out all about him. What was his name? Had he really taken the new room? What rent was he going to pay? Even Sora Rosa, the sybil among the cabbages opposite, raised her head and cocked an ear to catch the answer.

Why yes, the gentleman had taken the studio apartment for three years, paying half-a-year's rent in advance. (The landlord in the just pride of his heart mentioned precisely double the sum he had asked and received.) The signorino's name was Goffi, Rinaldo Goffi, and he was an artist — but *distintissimo*. Signor Freschi, the picture dealer in Via Condotti, bought everything he painted, and for sums!

At this juncture the distinguished artist came out from the doorway and, quite unembarrassed by his growing audience, gathered up more of his properties — a paint box under each arm, a saucepan in one hand and a wicker cage tied up in a yellow handkerchief in the other, and, thus loaded, ducked back into the Cimmerian darkness of the passage. The handcart was now empty, the porter paid, with a joke and a “*bicchiere*” thrown in, and Signor Goffi, rather out of breath, ascended the four flights of stairs and took possession of his new domain.

He was a Roman of the Romans, although not born



within the walls of the city. His father, a lawyer of good old provincial stock, had risen to be mayor of his native town, Orbetello, and, being also the owner of rich vine lands, was a man of solid position and comfortable fortune. His eldest son was following in his father's steps, and would inherit the fat Orbetello property; the second was a rising engineer; and the third, Rinaldo, having early shown quick intelligence and some artistic talent, had been sent to Rome for his education, with the understanding that if he satisfactorily completed his studies at the university he should be permitted to devote himself to the career of his choice in the very cradle of Art itself.

The parental allowance, a very modest one, was to be continued until he could earn his own living; but having inherited from a maternal relative a tiny property near Rome, he, as in duty bound, renounced the allowance in order that his sisters' doweries might be increased, and lived as Romans so well know how to live, decorously and comfortably, on a very small income. The "vigna" outside Porta San Giovanni was cultivated by peasants, whose family had tenanted it for some generations, on the mezzadria system, an equal division of profits with the owner. As hardly any taxes were levied in the Papal States, and no duty assessed on provisions passing the city gates, the full value of ownership and labor was reaped from the land, and the half-and-half arrangement, while equally distributing the losses of lean years, insured to both landlord and tenant the entire benefit of fat ones.

The lean years had been few in the garden vineyard



outside the Lateran Gate; the vines flowered into heady fragrance in the divine Roman spring behind their tall hedges of canes and roses, and bore their splendid bunches nobly when the late summer rains came to swell, nearly to bursting, the tightly clustered fruit baked black on the brown stems whence every leaf had been stripped in August to let the sun and air do their magic work. Then came the crown of the year, the October vintage, when every little winepress poured its purple froth from under the bare feet of the treaders into the seething vat below; when the very air was wine, from Lombardy to Messina, and each Sunday of the glowing month brought the population of the city, in gay attire, out to eat and drink, to laugh and dance and make music, from dawn to dark, in the garden of the gods, the vinelands of Romagna.

Rinaldo went with the rest, inviting a chosen party of fellow-students to the vigna, where the padroncino was always delightedly welcomed and the best the house could afford brought out for him and his friends. The meal was served in the open air, by the fountain, under the brown thatch woven in between the branches of the four cypress-trees as a shelter from the sun; old songs and young laughter accompanied the repast; the new wine, cloudy and sweet still and of terrific headiness, was tasted, and healths drunk in the safer product of past years. Then a game of bowls was played, a substantial present made to the "vignarolo," and, in the cool of the evening, the "raggazzi" climbed, six at a time, into the small open carriage hired for the occasion, and were borne



back to the town. The jolly driver, who had had his share of the day's good things, cracked his beribboned whip high over the heads of the little black horses, who, with roses on their ears and bows on their tails, frisked gaily along in a cloud of dust, running races with dozens of other vehicles full of noisy, happy people twanging guitars and shaking tamborines, very few of them at all the worse for the innocent orgy. At last came the scamper for the Lateran Gate before Ave Maria rang and it should be closed for the night, and the usually severe guardians only smiled at the merry scramble and closed the huge portals, regretfully when the last carrozzella had romped safely through.

Such holidays were the more enjoyed by Rinaldo because they were rare. In general he led a life as orderly and studious as that of Carlo Bianchi himself; but it was illuminated with hope for the future, with pleasure in the present in spite of the slow labor necessary, in spite of the many discouragements to be lived down before he could attain even modest proficiency in his kindly art. His chief relaxation in the summer time was provided by Father Tiber. The "Canottieri" club had not been organized in those early days, but its forerunner, a river boating society, drew the young men together in the warm afternoons and gave them many a cool swim and invigorating hour of rowing on the full yellow tide. Rinaldo was a favorite with his compeers, but he never allowed their importunities to interfere with the great business of his life, success in his reasonable aims. He had gone through every step of the art student's course with sturdy conscien-



tiousness, trusting nothing to inspiration, avoiding what he recognized as impressionism (the word itself had not been coined) as he avoided bad women and sour wine. He never imagined himself a genius; he was content to have talent and to cultivate it faithfully. Month after month he copied in the galleries, reverently tracing the perceptive lines of great masterpieces on his canvas and his memory. Constant work in the Life School filled the evening hours when the days were short, and humble acceptance of the master's sharp criticisms corrected any slightest tendency to conceit. With native shrewdness he had understood that there was always a market for good, unostentatious work, and he was not too proud to take commissions for copies when he could not sell his own really charming little pictures. For Rinaldo had an end in view, and he worked steadily towards it. Loneliness did not appeal to his cheerful nature; he meant to find a pretty, sweet-tempered wife as soon as he could support her, and to have a home as strongly foundationed as the one in Orbetello, of which he retained admiring and affectionate memories.

Having no fortune beyond the small income derived from the vigna, he could not expect to marry a girl with much of a dowry; in such matters a certain similarity of circumstances was the accepted rule. So he put by all that it was possible for him to save, resolved to marry while young and in love with life, and equally resolved to feel no pinch of poverty afterwards. His attitude was one not at all uncommon among his fellow-students and contemporaries; nothing could have



been further from the happy-go-lucky Bohemianism of the foreign artistic coteries, Scandinavian, German, Anglo-Saxon, which swarmed in Rome at that time. There is but one calling which makes Bohemians of the sober-going yet light-hearted children of Latium, the musical one. What would you have? When a man is born with a voice that can sing the stars down from heaven and the angels from paradise, is it not to be expected that he should also be born drunk with celestial wine? When he can compose operas whose airs, after the first hearing, are sung in every alley of the city — as happened the morning after the production of the *Trovatore* — no one can demand that he should understand the intricacies of account-books. It is the world's business to see to the daily wants of its Orpheuses and Apollos — and the world, as a rule, attends to the obligation nobly.

When Rinaldo took possession of his new studio he felt that he was marking an important point on the road of his ambitions. Hitherto he had shared the workshop of a friend, in the warren of studios which climb from the Via Babuino to the lower terraces of the Pincian Hill. Now, having sold some small pictures, and having secured through the dealer an order from a rich foreigner for a large one, he felt justified in assuming the responsibilities of quiet, airy quarters where he could work without interruptions. As he sat among his queer belongings — scattered over the floor in wild disorder — an unreasoning joy took possession of him, a certainty that he had found more in this new home than clean, bright rooms and a su-



perb north light. He rose and walked about, exploring his new domain, and lingering on the little terrace to breathe in the breeze which, rioting over from the coast, twenty miles away, seemed to disdain ever to sink into the hot streets so far below.

His attention was called to material things by the protests of the inhabitant of the wicker cage, still wrapped in the yellow handkerchief. He took it up gently and in a moment liberated a splendid gray and purple pigeon, which hopped on his shoulder and began to preen its ruffled feathers with a deeply injured air. "My poor Themistocles," Rinaldo apologized, "I had forgotten all about you. And your grain is spilt and your cup is empty." Gravely he attended to the creature's wants, while it fluttered about, taking in all the possibilities of the place. Themistocles was accused by Rinaldo's friends of being a most uncanny bird, watching their actions with a sarcastic eye and understanding many things which did not come within his province at all. Though he was allowed to roam at will over the housetops he always returned to his master in the evening and generally slept on the head of the lay figure, the carefully swathed treasure which had so excited the curiosity of the denizens of the street of the cow.

Rinaldo had become so accustomed to this quaint feathered companion that he would have felt lonely without him; indeed Themistocles had been the recipient of many a confidence and ambition which his master would have betrayed to no articulate listener. One must talk to something about the things nearest



one's heart, and it was fine to have a confidant who never objected or contradicted.

In an hour the properties were all in place. The little platform was set in the best light, and the ancient chair, topped with gilt cherubs and covered with ragged crimson velvet, was placed on it at the usual angle. How many cardinals, fair ladies, and swaggering bravos had sat in that chair during the last few years! Of each and all the corporeal body was supplied by the trusty lay figure, which, now liberated from its cerecloth, disclosed the amputation of one leg below the knee, the dislocation of the other, incurable paralysis of the fingers; a pink but blistered countenance, a nose injured by contact with a mahlstick hurled at it by Rinaldo's former studio companion; vacuous blue eyes and a set smile completed the model's attractions, and these were crowned by a damaged wig of a sickly yellow hue, much impoverished by the attentions of Themistocles, who was in the habit of tearing out locks of hair when playing at building a nest in the angle of the least-used easel. In a few minutes, however, the warworn veteran of the studio was sitting in the gilt chair, cleverly robed in the red tablecloth and impersonating a cardinal in full canonicals; a large canvas was brought out, the dear, bedaubed paint boxes opened, the favorite palette loaded with its daily rainbow of colors — and behold Rinaldo, forgetful of everything else, utterly happy, absorbed in his immortal work for the rich foreigner.

That evening he sat and smoked on his loggia, lifted far above the nightmare of fever which stalks in the



lowlying streets on summer nights. He felt that he had come into a new world, where stars and sky were a part of the bargain. Going over to the balustrade he leaned out and looked down into the street — a chasm of blackness at that hour — then up at the violet dome of the heavens quivering with a thousand points of tender radiance, and, remembering his schooldays, softly quoted, “*Donde uscimmo a riveder le stelle!*”

He too had left his purgatory behind and had entered a paradise all-sufficing to his simple soul, save for one thing, it contained no Beatrice. He did not call her that, however. Dante’s impersonal goddess would never have filled the vacant throne in Rinaldo’s heart. The unattainable had no charms for him, and the idea of worshiping another man’s wife at a respectful distance seemed both a mortal sin and a waste of time; he meant to fall joyfully in love with his own wife; and, being a sincere beauty worshiper, permitted himself to paint an enchanting picture of the future Signora Goffi. For hard-working, economical Rinaldo, with all his respect for conventionalities and his sound Roman sense, was at heart an exuberant idealist and had never considered it necessary to even clip the plumes of his radiant imagination. He had not yet beheld, but he was sure he should find, the face of holy fairness, the eyes of innocence and love, the golden hair that was to be crown and halo in one — the dear, pretty sister of angels and pattern of housekeepers whom he resolutely intended to marry.

He fell asleep wondering what kind of paper she would ask him to put on these whitewashed walls,



and woke — as it seemed to him, immediately afterwards — with a violent start, to find the air full of the pealing of bells, the bells of San Severino, which Fra Tommaso was ringing with all his might for the first Mass.

He jumped up and ran out on the terrace, pleased as a schoolboy, to see what everything looked like at this early hour. Glancing over the iron balustrade, he discovered that it lay at a right angle to the street and looked directly into the back court of San Severino. The connection with the church was evident, for there was a mendicant lifting the leather curtain for a lady to pass in. The first ray of the sun shot over the farther wall and lit on a golden head just disappearing under the curtain; the beggar made an aggrieved gesture and stretched out his hand for alms. Then the lady stepped back into the sunshine and stood for a moment seeking for something in her purse. Yes, the head was golden — Rinaldo's heart leaped for joy — and the fingers that dropped a copper in the outstretched hand were white and fine. Then the curtain was lifted once more, the lady disappeared, and the court was empty save for the beggar, who at once assumed his professionally forlorn air so as to be ready for the next passer-by.

“I too will go to Mass,” said Rinaldo to himself, “it is a pious habit.” Having dressed as fast as he could, he flew downstairs and made his way into the church, quiet and dim still, and holding only a few scattered worshipers. Mass had begun in a side chapel, and, kneeling on a prièdieu before the altar



steps was a girl, simply dressed in black, her face hidden in her hands. A smooth roll of hair like spun gold showed under a lace head covering; the figure was young and slight, and the pose perfectly graceful.

Rinaldo turned red with emotion. Might not — oh, Santa Speranza — might not this be the embodiment of his dreams? He actually trembled with apprehension lest the unseen face should fall short of what he asked to find in it; yet how could it, he asked himself, do less than match the harmony of the devout attitude, the fairness of the fingers through which the beads of a white rosary slipped one by one?

He drew nearer and leaned against the wall, where he could see her profile whenever she should raise her head. He crossed himself, took out his handkerchief and knelt down on it at the proper moments, and tried to remember his prayers, but these did not get much further than the attractive apparition before him and resolved themselves into wordless but frightened entreaties that the vision would show its face. The Mass was approaching its end when he was aware of a little stir among the chairs; then an old woman with a scanty handkerchief thrown over her head and its corners tightly held in her mouth, came and knelt down between him and the girl. The latter moved her head slightly in acknowledgment of her neighbor's presence, but continued her devotions without looking up. "What is she praying for so earnestly?" Rinaldo wondered. "Could Heaven refuse anything to such a santarella as that? Oh, what a shame to disturb her."

This was evidently not the old woman's view. She



had something to say and meant to get it off her mind at once. She pulled at the girl's sleeve and whispered sharply, "Giannella, listen. I must go to the cleaner for the padrone's coat — he is off to Ostia for the day, thank the Lord — so you take the key and go home, and here is the money for the tomatoes, don't forget."

She fished a heavy housekey and some jingling coppers from her bulging pocket and tried to thrust them into the girl's hand. The latter raised her head and looked round slowly, as if coming back to things of earth against her will. And then Rinaldo leaned heavily against the cold wall and felt dizzy and faint. What he beheld was only a pure young face with shadowed eyes and a rather sad mouth, but the expression was one of such grace, sweetness and candor that the young man might be forgiven the cry of his heart, "Amore mio, I have found you!" The morning hour, the quiet church, with its incense-laden air, the first slow sunbeams creeping across the spaces overhead — all combined to make a perfect setting for the picture of his dreams. He closed his eyes so that it should be imprinted on his memory for ever. Then he opened them quickly, for the young girl and the old woman had risen and were moving away. Should he follow them at once? No, better wait a moment; he could catch up with them unnoticed as soon as they should have passed out into the street. Ah, here came a friendly-looking old sacristan to put the chairs back in their places; he might know by what name heavenly visitants were called in this world of sin.



“La Biondina?” queried Fra Tommaso in answer to the eager inquiry. “Oh, she lives with Sora Mariuccia somewhere over there in the Palazzo Santafede. They serve Professor Bianchi, the archæologist — keep him and his books clean and cook his meals when he gives them anything to buy food with. La Giannella was an orphan whom Mariuccia took into compassion and brought up. Now that she has grown big and pretty, they say the Professor wants to marry her — what silliness! But she is a good girl and a great help to Mariuccia. Thank you, Signorino. Arrivederci,” as Rinaldo pressed a coin into his hand and scuttled away down the church in most unseemly haste.

Fra Tommaso looked after him and shook his head with an indulgent smile. Youth and romance appealed to the heart of him still, even as the dew and the sunshine penetrate to the heart of the gray old olive-tree and cause it to break out into leaf and fruit.

When Rinaldo reached the street the elder woman had disappeared, but “la Giannella” (he wished her name had not such a Florentine sound!) was standing before the vegetable stall apparently bargaining for tomatoes with the witch who presided there. The girl was smiling down at her, but the witch kept her eyes on her knitting and growled, “Take them or leave them. They are four baiocchi the pound to you as to others.”

When Rinaldo, standing in the cover of his own doorway opposite, wondered what would happen next, Giannella stealthily drew the big key from her pocket



and let it fall on the stones. The old lady looked up at the sudden clatter to find the girl still smiling at her and holding out three coppers in her hand.

"It is all I may spend, Sora Rosa," she said coaxingly. "Won't you be kind and give me the pound?"

"Ah, furba, cunning one!" exclaimed the other, "you always get what you want when you make me look at you. There, run along with my beautiful pomidori — and I hope they will choke the old miser you work for," she added viciously, as Giannella gathered up her spoils and went quickly down the street.

Of course Rinaldo followed her; that was a compliment one might pay to any woman so long as the regulation distance was maintained and no attempt made to attract her attention. He saw Giannella vanish into the palace, and then he slowly approached the portone, to try and find out which of the various stairways she would ascend. The building was so enormous, reaching the whole length of the street from Piazza Santa-fede to the Ripetta (on which thoroughfare its second façade opened) that it would be difficult to locate the modest apartment probably occupied by the Professor and his ministrants. Rinaldo gazed through the archway to where a fountain was bubbling in the courtyard, and found courage to put his question to the porter, who was lounging about, smoking a pipe while his wife scrubbed the lower steps of the chief staircase. It was so early that the maestro di casa had not come to open the cancelleria or office, a hall of sepulchral grimness on the ground floor, where the archives were kept and all the business of the house-



hold and estates carried on. The palace was still in dressing-gown and slippers, so to speak, and the porter in a fairly condescending mood, so Rinaldo was informed that to find Professor Bianchi he must take the third staircase to the right and ascend to the fourth floor, where he would see the name on the door. Rinaldo passed in, bent on discovering whether the apartment looked into the courtyard or out on the Via Santafede; if the latter, there might be some chance of catching another glimpse of that lovely girl at one of the windows. Passing along under the colonnade, where grooms were whistling and joking as they curried horses and sluiced down carriage wheels, he reached "Scala III." and raced up the long flights of steps, with two doors on every landing, and his heart beat more with exultation than exercise when at last he sprang on to the fourth of these and ascertained that "Bianchi" was the name on a shabby card nailed to the right-hand door. This was the street side.

Ten minutes later he was back on his own terrace, craning his neck to catch a glimpse of the palace. Only a far corner was visible from where he stood. Between him and it, adjoining the side of his loggia, stretched the wide roof of the Fathers' dwelling, most picturesquely diversified, as he now perceived, by detached rooms opening on flowery terraces perched at different levels, connected by irregular little flights of steps, and here and there by a small bridge, railed in where it spanned the depth of some inner court designed to give light to the central rooms of the old pile.



All was deserted at this hour; the Fathers were busy in the church or with their pupils, far below; and Rinaldo, with a thrilling new sense of adventure, started on a voyage of discovery. Vaulting over his own parapet he landed on the flat gray tiles beyond and made his way, after one or two mistakes, which led him to closed doors, to the farther side of the little city on the roof. It struck him as a charming place, quite operatic in arrangement, and much more appropriate for dreaming lovers than meditating monks.

As he dropped over the last division he started back, dazed by a whirr of wings beating against his face. When they rose and hovered above his head he saw that he had disturbed a flock of pigeons who apparently had their home in this delightful retreat. He was standing on a narrow loggia some twenty feet long, protected on the street side by a solid parapet on whose broad top bloomed carnations, roses and verbenas; a big oleander at one end waved its pink fragrant flowers against the stainless blue of the sky; at the other, a fat little lemon-tree displayed its pale rich fruit. Sweet herbs in boxes filled all available corners, and against a side wall, shaded by a tile roof which projected over a glass door, was a neat dovecote, showing that the protesting pigeons were the rightful inhabitants of the place.

The door was open, and Rinaldo, curious as a girl, peeped in. But there was nothing to attract him inside. A pallet bed, a table, a straw chair; a crucifix; and on the brick range a battered cooking pot; these constituted the furniture, and an embrowned old sacred



print the only ornamentation. The explorer made a grimace at the austerity of the abode and stepped back to the parapet to carry out the real object of his visit. Yes, he had come to the right spot. Far below was the Via Santafede, and opposite, on a level slightly lower than the one where he stood, were certain fourth-floor windows which, by all the canons of topography, should belong to the Bianchi apartment. Four were closed and curtained; the fifth and sixth were open and evidently belonged to the kitchen, for Rinaldo could see the bricks of the floor and the corner of the range. There was one more beyond, open too, with a carnation flowering on the sill. Within was a low chair with a basket of work on it. Was this the spot where the Biondina was accustomed to sit? Even as he framed the eager question, she came forward, put the basket down beside the chair and settled herself to her sewing without once glancing up. She had removed her lace veil, and her bent head shone in the morning light as her needle flew in and out of the linen. Once she turned to speak to someone in the room, and Rinaldo ducked behind his flowered defenses in fear of being seen; but in a moment he was leaning over again, taking in every detail of the picture across the street.

Now came another diversion. Giannella found some Indian corn on the window sill and scattered it on the outer ledge, whistling softly. One, two, half-a-dozen pigeons materialized out of blue space, paused a moment among the flower-pots near Rinaldo, cocked their heads, considered well, and then descended in a



flock to gather the golden harvest. He heard the girl laugh as she pushed away one which had boldly settled on her shoulder. Then someone within called sharply, and she left her place in haste. Rinaldo lingered awhile, but she did not return; and conscience, suddenly aware of the flight of time, drove him back to his own quarters, to the society of Themistocles, who was sick and sulky to-day, and of the lay figure, fallen stiffly aside in the grand chair, as if the red cotton cardinal were tired of waiting for his truant portrait painter.



## CHAPTER X

MARIUCCIA regarded it as too drastic an answer to her prayers when the erring padrone returned from Ostia shivering and sneezing, his clothes covered with green mud from the excavations where he had been joyously burrowing over some valuable discoveries just made in Tiber's forgotten port. His boots were soaked — his lunch uneaten.

"Figlio mio," cried Mariuccia, all her animosity quenched in anxious pity as she opened the door and beheld him in this heartbreaking condition. "What have you been doing? But this is fatal. Domine Dio, you shake, you have fever. Animal that I was to let you go in those old boots. Come in and let me put you to bed at once."

Bianchi resigned himself to her ministrations only too gladly, and while she rolled him up in hot blankets and surrounded him with fortifications of scalding bricks, Giannella, all undeterred by the late hour, rushed off to the apothecary for quinine and other potent drugs. She had never found herself in the street after dark before, but charity gave her wings and she was whipped along by remorse. Suppose the poor padrone were to die? And she had been feeling so cross with him lately, had been so ungrateful for the little attentions which he had been trying to show her and which probably only her own stupid conceit had



distorted into anything more alarming than kindness and condescension. Did man but know it, he has only to catch a cold in the head to make the women of his establishment forget all the grumpinesses and tyrannies of years. Poor darling, he wasn't well all the time! What a shame to have resented shortcomings which one ought to have known were but symptoms of approaching indisposition. Quick, cosset him, doctor him, and in a few days perhaps the gentle invalid will feel well enough to put his pretty foot on our necks again.

The Professor basked contentedly enough in the excitement he had caused, and by the end of the second day was feeling much better. Mariuccia having reduced him to a state of apparent subjugation and tucked him up in his blankets with fearful threats of what would overtake him if he put so much as a hand out of bed, hoisted a basket of wet linen on her head and climbed up to the roof where each tenant was allowed a small space for drying clothes.

Giannella had been feeling unusually light-hearted all day. The padrone was better — what a comfort. And the house was peaceful; there had been no more "little arguments" between him and Mariuccia. Then the morning had been so lovely when she slipped out to the five o'clock Mass, a summer morning with fragrance everywhere, as if ghostly violets and roses had been dancing about the streets all night and had left their sweetness behind them when they fled at the coming of the sun. This was not her own idea; Giannella could not be called imaginative; she had



found it in a book of very sentimental poems which somebody had most inappropriately presented to the Professor. But it struck her as pretty, and she had remembered it as she crossed the cool, empty piazza in the summer dawn. Then it had been most consoling to see a young man devoutly following the Mass. Young men were not in the habit of coming to church on weekdays; Mariuccia said they were too lazy or too frivolous. Mariuccia had a bad opinion of men in general, and Giannella accepted it, as she accepted most axioms enounced by her elders, in unruffled good faith. But here was living contradiction to such pessimism, a sprightly-looking young gentleman, as well dressed as Don Onorato himself, kneeling piously on a pretty silk handkerchief from the "Deus in adiutorium" to the "Ite Missa Est." Giannella was sure that she had never turned her head to look at him, and was a little puzzled to know how she had ascertained all these attractive details. True, she had dropped her rosary — very stupidly — and he had picked it up and returned it to her with grave politeness but without attempting to meet her glance of thanks. Ah, how comforting it was to a Christian heart to witness such faith and piety. The world was perhaps not so evil after all. Mariuccia, and the dear nuns who used to rail at it, and Padre Anselmo, who told her to give special thanks for her separation from it, had never seen a good, handsome young man saying his prayers!

So Giannella, singing softly to herself, was moving about, tidying up the kitchen (still redolent with damp



soap from Mariuccia's washtubs) when she heard the Professor calling for her. She ran to his door and looked in. There was very little of the Professor to be seen except a pair of mournful eyes and a long nose; all the rest was blanket. "Please give me my spectacles," he whispered hoarsely, "she took them away, and I am like one blind. They are over there on the bureau. Santa Paziienza! May I die of an apoplexy if I am ever so stupid as to catch cold again. She makes me do my purgatory, that woman."

Giannella brought the spectacles and respectfully placed them on the sufferer's nose; he beamed at her through them gratefully. Then he asked for something else, the Report of the Archæological Society, there on the chair, under the coat. She handed it to him and was about to move away when he slipped the pamphlet under his pillow and, forgetting all his promises, put out a hand to detain the girl, saying, "Wait a moment, Giannella. I have something to say to you — we may not be alone again."

Giannella gazed at him in surprise, "Well, Signor Professore?" she asked.

"It is this," he said; "but pray sit down. I fear you will be agitated. Calm yourself, my child, and be prepared for a beautiful piece of news."

He had never spoken to her so kindly before. What was coming? Something very pleasant, certainly. Giannella carefully removed the coat and sat down on the only chair, directly facing him, an expectant smile on her pretty face.

The Professor coughed and took a sip of barley



water. "Giannella, you are a good girl," he said solemnly, "and you are about to be rewarded. Now — control your feelings — I intend to make you my wife."

Giannella sprang to her feet with a shriek. He smiled indulgently. "I warned you not to give way to emotion," he continued; "of course you could not figure to yourself that this good fortune awaited you. There, there, Giannella — be calm, I entreat you."

The girl's face had turned crimson, she appeared about to choke. Then she hid her face in her hands and turned away her head over the back of the chair. Her shoulders were heaving convulsively.

The grating of a key in the lock of the front door brought the interview to a sudden end. "Run," whispered Bianchi, ducking down under his coverings with an expression of terror, "she is coming. Not a word to her. Run, you can thank me another time."

Giannella was gone already, flying to the most distant corner in the house, the corner behind her embroidery frame. There she stood, close in the angle of the wall, her apron over her face, trying to suppress all sound of the hysterical laughter which shook her from head to foot.

Mariuccia's war-horse tread resounded on the bricks of the kitchen. She called out through the open door, "Are you there, Giannella? Eh, but the roof is scorching to-day. I thought the soles of my shoes would come off." Receiving no answer she came and peered into the work-room, saw the bowed figure in the corner, rushed to the girl and tore the apron away



from her face. "Giannella, what is the matter?" she cried. "For the love of Heaven tell me what has happened."

"Go to the padrone, quick," gasped Giannella, looking up at her with scarlet cheeks and tear-drowned eyes. "Oh, mamma mia, I shall die of laughing — it hurts — speak gently to him — he has gone mad."

Mariuccia turned pale and her jaw fell. "Madonna Santissima," she whispered, "give me strength. Has he got a knife?" In imagination she saw the Professor leaping wildly round his room seeking for someone to kill.

"No, no, he is quiet — there is no danger, but he is quite mad, I fear. It must be the fever, I suppose."

"Leave it to me," Mariuccia exclaimed. "I will give him a calmante. Where is the camomile?"

A few minutes later she entered his room on tiptoe, inwardly cursing the "scrocchio," the bit of hard-creaking leather which the shoemaker always put into the soles of the boots (and charged extra for, the brigand!) to make them sound new to their dying day. Bianchi was pretending to be asleep. His nurse came and leaned over him anxiously. He was breathing with suspicious regularity, and the confiscated spectacles were still on his nose.

"He has been getting up," she whispered to herself, "and the poor boy has caught a chill. It has sent the blood to his head. But he shall perspire, I will put on leeches — it will pass. Padroncino," she murmured coaxingly, "wake up for a moment.



Drink this." And she held the scalding cup to his lips.

The invalid was astute enough to see his advantage in her anxiety. He opened his eyes wearily and gazed up at her. "I do feel very ill," he said, "and it is less from the cold I caught than from the agitation I suffered before going to Ostia. Oh, my nerves are in a terrible state. I was not fit to go — after you had made me that scene. My poor Mariuccia, you must never so upset me again. It is not safe. I do not know now whether I shall ever recover from the shock."

"What do you feel?" she asked anxiously. "Is it the head? Oh, you break my heart. Rash beast that I was to let my evil tongue so disturb you."

"And all for nothing," continued the patient reproachfully. "What had I done? Merely proposed an act of benevolence — which I intended to follow up with one of noble generosity. But your ignorant impetuosity shall not turn me from my purpose. If I recover from this terrible illness, this fire in my head, this numbness in my limbs, then, my good Mariuccia, you shall carry the burden of maintaining Giannella no longer. That pertains to me in future. Have you not realized that I am going to marry her?"

"Dio mio," wailed the old woman, "the girl is right, the fever has gone to his head." Then, forcing herself to be calm for the sick man's sake, she said in soothing tones, "Padroncino mio bello, you are agitating yourself again. You must not talk any



more. Go to sleep — and when you are better you shall say all that is in your mind. There, are you comfortable?" She smoothed the pillows, drew up the coverings, and left him in the darkened room.

Outside in the passage she leaned back against the wall, faint with fear and remorse. It was all her fault. Who could say how this dreadful visitation would end? In a fatal illness, or in permanent derangement of that illustrious understanding? She would fetch a doctor at once — God send she should not have to go for the priest!

There was an anxious consultation between the two women over the kitchen table that night. The doctor, put in possession of the facts, had diagnosed the distemper as "*rabbia rientrata*" (unvented anger), one of the most dangerous known to the faculty. How many regrettable losses to society had it not caused! And how unfortunate that the aid of science should not have been invoked at once. What could one do after well-intentioned but ignorant persons had taken it upon themselves to treat it for forty-eight hours?

Mariuccia and Giannella collapsed under this bitter reproach, and it was only when the afflicted Professor had been finally lured to slumber by innocent opiates of orange-flower water that Giannella recovered sufficiently to remark to her companion, "I do not think we really made so many mistakes, after all. What did the doctor order but just what you had done? Leeches, quinine, a sedative — I wonder if he knows so very much more than you do?"

"Tell me, Giannella?" Mariuccia asked, lifting her



head and looking at the girl curiously, "I had not time to ask you before — what did the padrone say to you? What was it that first showed you he was delirious?"

Giannella thought for a moment, then she replied, while the lamplight showed a gleam of rebellious amusement in her eyes, "He told that me he had a piece of beautiful good news for me, and I sat down to hear it — and then he said he — he intended to marry me. I could not help laughing. He looked so funny, and the thought was such craziness. But I am sorry — I should have had more heart."

Mariuccia reflected; then she shook her head sagely. "This craziness has been coming on for a long time, I believe," she said, "it is not all the result of our little argument the other day. I must tell you now — though I did not mean to — that we were talking about you then, Giannella. He said he wished to pay for your board — he, who counts his coins as if they were beads of a rosary. 'Santo Baiocco, ora pro nobis!' Proverino, it is his only fault. I ought not to speak of it now that he is in such danger. And then I was angry — and he said to me what he said to you this morning, that he intended to marry you. Now let us reason a little, *figlia mia*. You have been at home for over four years, and the padrone hardly seemed to see you till three months ago. He changed then, suddenly. Now have you no suspicion of what was the cause?"

"I cannot imagine," replied Giannella simply. "I thought at first that perhaps he was sorry for me



because I should soon be growing old and ugly and my shoes were going to pieces — and since dear Signora Dati of good memory died — and the Princess is too busy to remember, there is no one to get me any work. But now he speaks of — marriage. What man in his right senses could wish to marry me, nearly twenty-one and without a penny?" She looked up in perplexed good faith as she asked the question, and the lamplight fell on the calm, lovely face which had so enchanted one man that he dreamed of it all night and crept down to the church morning after morning to catch another glimpse of it.

"There might be plenty," growled Mariuccia, "if they could only see you. You will be beautiful till you are a hundred, core of my heart. Now don't smother me!" for Giannella suddenly ran round the table and hugged her friend. "But the padrone is not like other men. The time has come when I must tell you what I have discovered. You are young, you saw nothing, but I saw, I understood. This bewitchment had a beginning. It came with the first visit of that stout gentleman who asked you such strange questions. Do you remember? Ah, they could not deceive me. I wish I had thought of it when he was last here. If he comes again I will ask him some questions, I can tell you. What did he want here, putting folly into my poor boy's head and disturbing the tranquillity of a Christian family? I have lived twenty-three years with that poor afflicted angel in there, and never have we had a disagreement till that



fat demon, whoever he was, came to upset us all, and may his best dead suffer for it. There, it is late, go to bed, Giannella, I am going to sit up in here — the padrone may want something.”



## CHAPTER XI

**B**IANCHI judged it prudent to prolong his relapse in order to profit by the softening of heart it had induced in his attendants. He obeyed Mariuccia's commands with touching submission and kept her affectionately uneasy about him by well-timed sighs and complaints. She would not leave the house till he should be better, and she would not leave Giannella alone with him; in fact she bade her keep out of his sight altogether, hoping rather forlornly that his mad project would disappear with the other symptoms of his alarming indisposition.

So Giannella went alone to Mass and marketing, and came home each day with more pink in her cheeks, more light in her eyes. Her spirits seemed to have returned and she hummed little tunes over her work, just as she had done when she first came back from the convent. Some of the moist sweetness of the summer morning followed her in when Mariuccia opened the door to her and her parcels at seven o'clock; and through the long hot days of July she looked as fresh and bright as an opening rose in the first sunbeam.

The inhabitants of the Via Tresette knew all about it long before Giannella did. The dairyman's wife told her lord that the Signorino Goffi was as good as in love, "bello che innamorato," with the Biondina.



“Don’t tell me,” she declared, “that a young fellow like that would go to church every day at five o’clock — and bring down a clean handkerchief to kneel on every blessed morning — if he were not in love! He is rich. Has he not a splendid vigna outside Porta San Giovanni, from which he received fruit and wine but yesterday? The man who brought it told me all about him. He is disinterested, one can see that, for he did not bargain more than a day over the rooms, and he has never tried to beat me down on the eggs and ricotta — oh, he will marry Mariuccia’s Biondina, and was I not the cleverest of women to insist on your building a good apartment that could accommodate a family, instead of just a studio and a cubbyhole of a kitchen as you wished to do?”

Sora Rosa opposite nodded her old head in approval of these sentiments, delivered in clarion tones on the dairyman’s doorstep. She had seen it happening for a week now, had seen Giannella come down the street from Palazzo Santafede with the sun behind her and Rinaldo with the sun on his face emerge from his door at the same moment; had seen them meet at the low entrance to the San Severino courtyard, pause an instant, smile involuntarily, and then disappear as the heavy old portal swung to behind them.

Fra Tommaso too knew all about it. Divided between sympathy for the youth and romance, and jealousy for the respect due the sacred precincts, he had watched his old and his new parishioner closely, but had found nothing to criticise in their behavior. “Good children, good children,” he said to himself as



he saw Giannella go out and Rinaldo follow her, with proper deliberation. Of course he had obtained the young man's history in full from the communicative lady of the dairy, and indulged in a little self-approval for having been the immediate instrument of obtaining for the Biondina the fine instruction which would fit her to be the sposa of that superior young gentleman, Signorina Goffi. Padre Anselmo might talk about the evils of human distractions, but there could not be anything very dangerous in them when they had such splendid results at this.

Things were nothing like so clear to the hero and heroine of the popular little romance. They had traveled no farther than the outer garden of love's fairy habitation, and Giannella at any rate did not dream that anything sweeter or more perfect could lie beyond. The thrilling excitement of seeing Rinaldo coming to meet her at the doorway, the silent passage to their places in the chapel, the kneeling so near each other for the blessed half hour — this had seemed enough at first to bring her happiness for the day. But when on the fourth morning Rinaldo had overtaken her in the court, and, with profound apologies, returned to her the purse and key which she had left lying on the chair — when, baring his head he looked in her face and she saw the glow on his and heard his voice for the first time — then Giannella's heart beat so wildly that she could find no words to say and her trembling fingers almost dropped the objects he held out to her.

Together they had left the courtyard, and Rinaldo,



lifting his hat respectfully, had turned away fearing she might think he was going to have the presumption to accompany her. But when, on looking round, he saw her entering the dairy, he reached the threshold in two strides, for here was his opportunity. Sora Amalia, the proprietress, should introduce him properly. Then Giannella would know as much about him as he already knew about her. After that — leave it to him to make the most of the acquaintance.

As he entered the dark cool shop, Giannella was burying her face in a huge posy of carnations which stood on the marble counter midway between the butter and the fresh eggs. Sora Amalia gave him a cheery good-morning, and Giannella lifted her face, all rosy, and dewy from the flowers, and drew back a little as if to wait her turn until the new-comer should have been attended to. Rinaldo, with a quick movement of the head, manifested his wish to Sora Amalia, who, smiling broadly, said: “Signorina Giannella, this is Signor Goffi, the great painter, who has taken our apartment. Some day, if you like, I will take you upstairs and show you his pictures. For to me he is already like a son. Oh, signorino, that salad you gave me from your vigna — it was a cream, a flower of tenderness. That of Sora Rosa over there is material, tough, compared to it. And the wine — of a sincerity we had a treat last night, Pippo and I.”

She chattered on, to give the young people time to look at each other, and also to impress Giannella with the importance of the new lodger. As soon as she



ceased, Rinaldo caught at the proposal contained in her speech.

“My pictures are nothing to mount the stairs for, signorina,” he said eagerly, “but the view — if you would condescend, and Sora Amalia could come up now?”

“Oh, not now, I am afraid I have not time,” Giannella interposed, addressing Sora Amalia; “another day, perhaps, if you can come — and Signor Goffi permits?” she added, looking up at him and flushing divinely. “Now I have still to go to the apothecary with this prescription — and he is not very near — and does take so long to prepare the medicine — and you know, Sora Amalia, there is much to do at home.”

“Is there illness in the family, signorina?” Rinaldo inquired with concern. “It grieves me to hear it.”

Sora Amalia touched his hand as it lay on the counter and gave him a broad wink with the eye Giannella could not see. “Illness?” she exclaimed, “there is indeed. The Signor Professore has been in bed for a week. Now, signorino, if you wish to do him a good turn — and get a nice walk in the morning air for your health’s sake — you will take this prescription and get it made up, and bring it yourself to Sora Mariuccia, who will thank you for sending Giannella home so quickly.”

She had whisked the paper from the girl’s hand and held it out to him, laughingly defending it from the rightful owner, who was trying to get it back.

“Oh, please, Sora Amalia,” Giannella pleaded, “how can you imagine that I would let Signor Goffi



take all that trouble for us? I will go for it myself, of course."

But Rinaldo was quick to seize the golden opportunity. The paper vanished into his pocket and he was making for the door when Giannella ran after him. "Please, please, since you are determined to be so charitable," she said, "here is the money to pay for it," and she tendered a silver coin. He took it gravely, and they both paled a little at the touch of hand and hand.

"I will bring the medicine to the palazzo," he said rather huskily.

"How could you, Sora Amalia?" Giannella remonstrated when he was gone; "what will he think of being asked to do such a thing for a stranger?"

"I will show you to-morrow what he thinks," replied the good woman, "and perhaps I will give you some of it. There will be a pile of fruit and vegetables a yard high, from his vigna, on this counter to-morrow morning. Run along and tell Sora Mariuccia all about it — and be sure to open the door to him yourself when he brings the medicine."

Giannella was rather reticent with Mariuccia, however, and gave her story of how Sora Amalia's lodger had run off with the prescription in as few words as possible. She expected to receive a good scolding for the indiscretion she must have committed — or permitted — before things reached such a pass, though she could not quite see where she had been in fault.

Mariuccia had no such doubts. "That blessed Sora Amalia!" she exclaimed, her eyebrows meeting



in rhadamanthine severity across her low forehead. "What a want of education! Could she not perceive that she was taking the most indiscreet liberty — imposing on the gentleman's good nature, so that he must have been deeply displeased? I will apologize to him when he comes. I will tell him that we are shocked at that woman's imprudence. Four flights of stairs to climb, and his time wasted! I wonder you did not die of shame, Giannella, at being made the occasion of such inconvenience to him."

Giannella remembered Signor Goffi's ecstatic alacrity and ventured to say that he did not seem at all annoyed, on the contrary, very happy to be of service.

"Then," thundered Mariuccia, "you have spoken to him before. You have permitted him to make your acquaintance — in secret. Oh, this is terrible. How can I ever let you out of my sight again?"

"I never spoke to him till this morning," cried the girl. "I have seen him, yes, how could I help it? He comes to Mass every day. Is the church my private chapel? Is no one else to enter it while her Excellency, Giannella Brockmann, is saying her prayers there? How dare you say that I have made his acquaintance in secret? I will not hear such things. You speak as if you believed evil of me."

Was this Mariuccia's submissive Giannella, this outraged young woman with scarlet cheeks and flashing eyes standing up to her inquisitor with rebellion in every tone of her voice? Mariuccia drew back from her in surprise, and before she had recovered enough to reply, the doorbell tinkled hoarsely.



“There he is,” said Giannella. “You must open to him yourself. I will not. He would see that you have been pouring shame over me.” And she turned her back and sat down to her work, shaking with indignation.

Mariuccia went to the door, nothing loth. “I shall see what he is like at any rate,” she told herself in the passage. “Some silly dandy who thinks he can make eyes at a poor girl because she has to go out alone. That’s the kind. But I’ll settle him.” And she opened the door with a jerk and stood squarely on the threshold as if barring the way to impertinent intruders.

“With permission?” inquired a courteous voice, and one hand held out a small parcel while the other removed the hat from a handsome young head. “I took the liberty — Sora Mariuccia will pardon me, I trust. I have heard of her so much from Fra Tommaso — and I knew she was anxious to have this as soon as possible. How is the chiarissimo Professore this morning?”

If the young man felt any chagrin at the substitution of this janitress for a prettier one he effaced all signs of it from his address. He was so good-looking, so urbane, there was such honest kindness in his smile, that the hardest feminine heart must have softened to him. Mariuccia thawed at once. What if he were to prove — but she chased away the rosy dream, and answered his inquiry about the padrone’s health, thanked him for his amiability and, remembering that the Professor was safe in bed, was actually going to



ask Rinaldo to enter. It went against all her traditions to keep anyone standing at the threshold.

But Rinaldo had his traditions too. One did not impose oneself as a visitor on the strength of a rendered service. "Levo l' incommodo" (I remove the inconvenience of my presence), he said, bowing and turning to depart. Then a thought struck him, and he came back to ask: "Can I be of any service in the way of commissions while the Professor is ill? it would be for me a pleasure. I live over the dairy in the Via Tresette, close by. A word to Sora Amalia, and I am at your disposal at any time, day or night. Arrivederci, Sora Mariuccia."

"A beautiful youth," she remarked to herself when she had thanked him and closed the door. "And well brought up. He would not even come in. I do not believe he is running after Giannella at all. Poor child — it might be a good thing for her if he did — if he has any money. San Giuseppe mio, send us a good husband for her, and restore my little padrone to his right mind. I will never complain of his faults any more if only he drops his crazy idea of marrying Giannella. Eccomi qu , here I come!" This in answer to a querulous call from the invalid's room.

When she returned to the kitchen Giannella's bad temper had disappeared. She was standing at the window amusing herself with feeding Fra Tommaso's pigeons, who looked upon her as their supplementary Providence, since she always had crumbs and corn in store for them. The wide window sill so near the



deep palace eaves was shady in the hot hours, and the pretty tame creatures often haunted it, strutting up and down, carrying on their little sham fights over tempting morsels or boldly hopping on Giannella's shoulder to ask for more. She was quite unconscious that she was ever watched from across the way at these moments, but, to tell the truth, Rinaldo trespassed unwarrantably on Fra Tommaso's premises and wasted a good deal of time in the occupation of feeding his eyes on the sight of his goddess and the preoccupation of preventing her or anyone else from finding it out.

Themistocles was bolder. He had taken to Fra Tommaso's loggia and his own kin there very kindly, and had wheeled towards Giannella's window more than once in the wake of the rest; but he had never settled there till this morning, when he at last permitted himself to be courted and captured.

"Fra Tommaso has got a new pigeon and a fine name for it too," said Giannella as Mariuccia entered. She had made up her mind to pardon her old friend and this seemed a good way of opening up a reconciliation. "See, is he not a beauty? And he has a silver band round his neck, with 'Themistocles' on it. What grandeur! Fra Tommaso grows extravagant in his old age. Ah, ungrateful one," she cried, as the bird slipped from her hand and soared away over the convent roof, "being full you depart, but you will return with great love when you are hungry again."

"That reminds me," Mariuccia replied, catching



at the flag of truce, "that gentleman who brought the medicine just now spoke of Fra Tommaso. He seems a nice quiet young man."

"Who? Fra Tommaso?" Giannella asked. "He seems to me a nice talkative old one." And she laughed, being too full of happiness to quarrel long with anyone to-day. Her troubles seemed to have vanished into air. The padrone was out of sight and mind, and the sun was rising on her horizon at last.

After this it was impossible to refuse to speak to Rinaldo when she met him in the mornings, and the little conversations in the back court of San Severino became very friendly and intimate. Rinaldo always began with eager inquiries after the health of the illustrious Professor, as if his peace of mind depended on the answer. Then he hoped that the most respectable Sora Mariuccia was well. After that, conventionalities were forgotten. In the most natural way in the world each came to know all about the other. Rinaldo had learned Giannella's limited life story from her own lips, had had to avow his admiration of Mariuccia's goodness — "She is an angel, that woman," Giannella declared one morning, her eyes suffused with emotion; "she seems cross and rough, but she has a heart of gold. Oh, you will love her when you know her better."

And Rinaldo, his heart quite full of another love, proclaimed that he already felt for the good woman the affection of a son. There was nothing he would not do to prove it. Let Giannella try him. Meanwhile, would she not persuade Sora Mariuccia to



bring her to his studio some Sunday afternoon? They could have a little refreshment on the terrace, and he would get his friend, Peppino Sacchetti, who sang divinely, to come and bring his mandolin, and though indeed the pictures were not worth looking at, the signorina would be amused at the antics of the pigeon, Themistocles, who would dance about when Peppino played, and was altogether a most sagacious bird.

The first part of this speech opened up a dizzy vista of happiness not to be contemplated for a moment when one had only one old frock and one's shoes were going to pieces. So, with a determined gulp, Giannella ignored it and replied to the last words only.

"Oh, he is yours then, the one with the silver collar? I thought he belonged to Fra Tommaso. Why, he comes to see me ever day."

"Beato lui, too happy bird!" cried Rinaldo, with sudden passion in eyes and voice. "My little sister sent him to me from Orbetello, saying he would bring me good fortune. It is he who is fortunate." Then, as the color flushed up in Giannella's cheek at his cry, he went on more quietly, "Signorina, I am coming to-morrow to bring Sora Mariuccia something from the vigna — poor stuff, but fresher than we get in the city. Then I shall myself invite her for next Sunday. What kind of ice-cream do you like best."

"Framboise," she replied, without a moment's hesitation. Then she remembered. Such pleasures were not for her. She turned away to hide the silly tears that would come into her eyes, and said chokingly,



“Oh, please do not speak of it, Signor Goffi. It is quite impossible — there are good reasons. We never go anywhere — we could not come.”

Rinaldo was silent, looking at the averted head where the gold gleamed royally through the carefully mended lace. His trained eye took in the poverty of the thin black dress with its neat little darns here and there; it clothed the delicate young form very kindly, but it was a thousand times unworthy of such honor. Being artist as well as lover, he understood, and his heart was so hot with love and pity that for the first time in his life words failed him. Giannella moved towards the outer gate of the court, and he followed dumbly, aching to find expression for what he felt. But there was nothing to say which would not have been an offense; he could not offer sympathy where he had no right to seem to understand. His Latin tact came to his aid, however, as he held the door open for her to pass out.

“We will put off our party a little, then, signorina,” he said, gentle detaining her. “The weather is warm just now. Perhaps it would please you better to come to the vigna, some day when the grapes are ripe? It will be cooler then.” And he added to himself, “And by that time, my beautiful heart, you will have a Sunday dress of splendid blue silk, and a gold chain to match your hair, and you will go to your own, for the vigna will belong to you. We will be married on the first Sunday in October, and what a sposina you will make!”

Giannella murmured something and hastened away



towards the Piazza Santa fede, and Rinaldo stood looking after her till she disappeared. Then he regained his studio in haste, and applied himself to the picture for the rich foreigner. He was to receive five hundred scudi for it, and that was just the sum he wanted to put the apartment in order and buy his wedding gifts for his bride. He had been tempted to commit the extravagance of having a living model this time, so as to get on faster; but he reflected that the hired peasant would not look much more like a real cardinal than the ever-obedient but rickety clay figure, and then — three pauls an hour! No, it was not to be thought of — when one had set one's mind on that other extravagance, that holy folly of marriage.

“Come along, your Eminence,” he exclaimed as he knocked Themistocles off the ragged head and crowned it with a red skullcap. Then he got his old friend seated in the cherub-crowned chair, pinned the red tablecloth round him in dignified folds, and in half-an-hour had forgotten that he was not contemplating a live dignitary of the Church.

Towards evening the friend of whom he had spoken to Giannella, Peppino Sacchetti, came to tempt him away to the Tiber for a row and a swim before the sun went down.

“Capperi, Nalduccio,” he cried as he looked from the model to the picture, “but you have a fine big imagination! I could not have drawn that from our old manikin. I see Themistocles has been trying to mend that bump on its nose. When are you going to have living models? You are a rich man, you



rascal, and you can pay for them now. I wish I could."

"Peppino mio," replied Rinaldo, as he worked his palette off his thumb and prepared to wash his brushes, "I shall have a living model, and a very beautiful one, next October. Meanwhile I have an imagination which is neither fine nor big — but, thank Heaven, extremely obedient. It saves me much money. While I am painting, I see a cardinal, and I am most respectful to him. I address that person in the tablecloth as 'your Eminence' and push him into his place with reverence when he tumbles down. When the rich foreigner receives the picture, he also sees a cardinal, and he admires him, for he has probably never cast eyes on a real one. The picture goes with him to his nasty cold heretic country where there are no cardinals. Everybody admires it, and the naturally good of heart wish that they belonged to a Church governed by noble ecclesiastics with pink cheeks and Chinese white hair and beautiful taper fingers (I always draw the hands from those same old casts), and if God is good to them they come to Rome and save their souls. I obtain all these fine results and save many precious scudi — because I have an obedient imagination. Cultivate one, Peppino mio, it is as good as a savings bank."



## CHAPTER XII

THE hereditary lawyer of the Santafede family caused great inconvenience about this time by leaving a world of woe and circumlocution, to reap the reward stored up for honest men of business elsewhere. Since that section of the heavenly mansions cannot be overcrowded it is to be hoped that he met with a warm welcome. His demise, lamentable though it appeared to his employers, brought solid satisfaction to his successor, a stout young gentleman with a turn for malicious humor, whom he had himself trained and designated as the disciple on whom his mantle of faded parchments was to fall when he himself should no longer have any use for it.

Guglielmo De Sanctis swelled with pride when Ferretti, the power behind the Santafede throne, sent for him to come to the cancelleria to make out a new lease for one of the apartments. He had acquired considerable knowledge of the Santafede affairs through having for some years passed attended to those of the Princess's brother, Cardinal Cestaldini, who had warmly endorsed his recommendation for the vacant post. As the young lawyer saw in the appointment another source of income and honor for the rest of his life, his heart was gay within him as he passed under the archway into the Santafede palace



to answer the maestro di casa's summons one fine morning late in July.

The Professor was better that day and Mariuccia intended to regale him with one of her "golden fries;" Giannella, running out in haste to buy whitebait and cucumbers, and counting her coppers in the corner of the red handkerchief which takes the place of the market basket in Rome, nearly bumped into the lawyer as he turned the angle of the colonnade. She pulled up with hurried excuses; he declared they should come from him; and then, recognizing the padrone's mysterious visitor of some weeks ago, she greeted him politely and asked after his respectable health. He did not reply at once, but stood looking at her with slightly knitted brow and a puzzled expression. Then, calling up a smile, he removed his hat and held it in his hand while he assured her that his health was fairly good, thank Heaven, hoped the scirocco was not too trying to that of the Signorina Brockmann; though indeed, if he might be permitted to say so in all sincerity, that was evident, since she looked so well (his eyes said: so pretty), and reminded her that he was always at her command should she require his services.

Giannella, unaccustomed to flowery speeches, was puzzled in her turn; she thanked him briefly, and passed on, unwilling to be seen conversing alone with any young man — except one. De Sanctis turned and gazed after her. "What a curious girl!" he said to himself; "she has bought no finery, she runs out marketing with a red handkerchief and a few baiocchi



—I wonder what she is doing with her money? I suppose she has lived so long with Bianchi that she has caught some of his parsimonious tricks. Oh well, it is none of my business. Now for Ferretti," and he dived into the cool vaulted hall of the cancelleria.

The Professor was certainly much better. Indeed he intended to go out that afternoon to visit the Cardinal and have an exciting talk about a discovery made by his Eminence, a bit of an inscription unearthed in the Cestaldini cellars by the workmen who were repairing the drains. At this time of year these were always looked to, as heavy rains usually closed the long summer drought, and the Tiber, rising in his silt-choked bed, was apt to bubble up and make improvised fountains in unexpected places. On the discovery of the interesting fragment the Cardinal had suspended the repairs, feeling sure that the remainder of the inscription could be found, and had sent for his friend Carlo Bianchi, that light of dark learnings, to come and advise him as to further investigations.

Bianchi was keen to get on the scent, but there was one visit he proposed to pay before calling on the Cardinal. In all the dignity of clean clothes and returning health, he summoned Giannella to his study that morning and repeated his declaration of the generous intention to add to all his past kindness to her by shortly making her his wife. Seeing that he was perfectly well and otherwise in his right mind she did not laugh this time, but told him, with a quiet decision he had never yet seen her display, that



she could not even pretend to consider his proposal an honor; it was degrading to himself and repulsive to her. What possible grounds for a union, she asked, could exist between them? He was old enough to be her father, rich and distinguished. She was a waif and a pauper, and ignorant in the extreme, having forgotten, as she mournfully declared, the little book learning that the nuns had taught her, and being now only fit to cook and clean and mend, services she was most willing to render him in return for his charity in allowing her to live under his roof. There she trusted she might still remain — if he would at once and forever abandon a project, the fulfillment of which would only make him ridiculous in the eyes of his friends, and to which she herself would never, never consent.

Exit Giannella, shaking with the anger of battle, so new to her calm, equable nature, and enter Mariuccia, who had frankly listened at the keyhole and heard every word. This time she would not let her feelings master her. She preserved a respectful attitude — with superhuman effort and many mental appeals to “Domine Dio” to keep His Hand on her head. After repeating all Giannella’s arguments, she implored her beloved padroncino, whom she loved as a master and as a son, by all he held dearest in life, personal comfort, avoidance of expense, the respect of his many admiring friends, to put this caprice out of his clever head and restore peace to his unfortunate but ever devoted family.

Mariuccia’s address was a triumph of good sense



and good temper, but Bianchi was unmoved by it. A stony silence ensued when she ceased. Then Bianchi, glowering at her through those big spectacles, told her that an ignorant female could be no judge of an instructed man's motives or actions; that he thanked her for her expressions of affection, which he wished she would prove by either minding her own business or by using her influence to bring Giannella to a more reasonable frame of mind. He intended — here he glanced at a fly-blown calendar on the wall and appeared to be making a rapid mental calculation — yes, he intended to espouse Giannella in about three weeks; in any case before the end of August. Mariuccia might retire. He was going out.

Mariuccia, cold at heart, found her way back to the kitchen, sank into a chair and let her head fall forward on the table. Giannella, who had been working off her feelings by some violent sweeping in the inner room, came and knelt beside her and comforted her dumbly; both their hearts were heavy with the sense of disaster, but Giannella had something which Mariuccia had not — youth and love and hope, to strengthen her hard tried courage.

When he was left alone Bianchi locked the door and stuffed a bit of paper into the key hole. Then he took a rusty key from his vest pocket and opened the old secretary by the window. From one of the pigeon holes he drew forth a bundle of papers, laid them on the table, and read them through one by one. Had Giannella been able to look over his shoulder her eyes would have opened wide at the



revelations they contained, and at the same time all surprise at the padrone's extraordinary infatuation would have died with the knowledge. But Giannella, Bianchi was resolved, never should see them, never should know that her unwillingly written signature was attached to the acknowledgment of certain respectable sums accruing to her while she should be still under the Professor's tutelage as a minor, and to be delivered into her own keeping on her twenty-first birthday. For the documents on Bianchi's table set forth that one Siegfried Brockmann, a merchant in Copenhagen, had died about a year earlier, leaving his modest fortune to the person who should prove to be his nearest relation. As he had had a brother who lived abroad, the conscientious authorities instituted a search, which resulted in the discovery that the brother had met his end in Rome, and that the person who should claim the benefit of Siegfried Brockmann's will was this brother's daughter, proved by the records of the Danish Consulate to have survived her father. Inquiries of the police (who in those days kept a strict registry of the families of all householders), and of the parish priests, revealed that the child had been taken in charge by one Mariuccia Botti, who had ever since that date been in the service of Professor Carlo Bianchi, the distinguished archæologist. As this gentleman, when referred to, claimed to be the responsible guardian of the girl, and furnished, from his hastily reconstructed memoirs, convincing proofs of her identity, the negotiations for the transfer of the money were carried on with him



by Signor De Sanctis, the legal adviser of the Danish Consulate, and he was now in command of some two thousand scudi a year, to be handed over in due form to Giannella on her coming of age in the ensuing September. Since that date was so close when the business was finally wound up in July, it was agreed that the principal, together with the year's income which had accrued between the testator's death and the finding of his heir, should lie at interest in the Banco di Roma, barring the sum of one hundred scudi handed to Bianchi to pay him for Giannella's maintainance during the interval, and two hundred to be given to the girl herself to provide her with a proper wardrobe and a little pocket money.

It was for this sum that Giannella had signed a receipt. The Professor, on the first announcement of her inheritance, confided to De Sanctis that the girl was of a nervous, excitable temperament, and begged to be allowed to inform her of her good fortune himself. He would break the news quietly and gently. He added that she was shy with strangers, and, like so many young ladies, inclined to be hysterical on slight provocation. Giannella would not have recognized herself from the Professor's description. De Sanctis in his one short conversation with her, had satisfied himself that she was of sound mind; her answers to his questions as to her childhood at Castel Gandolfo, her education at the convent, her having no friends except Signor Bianchi and Mariuccia, were given with frankness and clearness. Bianchi, in a subsequent interview with the lawyer,



told him that she had been much overcome by the revelation made to her, and suggested, in order to avoid any emotional scene, "so disturbing to a man of business," that he should give her the two hundred dollars himself and she should sign a receipt for it in De Sanctis' presence without any further discussion of the subject.

De Sanctis consented gladly. He had a horror of scenes, pleasant or unpleasant, and was anxious to save time and get the little business off his mind. The Professor's reputation for parsimony had rather heightened than diminished the general opinion of his probity. It seemed fortunate for the girl that she should have such an upright and careful adviser. Nevertheless the lawyer's bewilderment was great at meeting her quite a fortnight after the conclusion of the transaction in the same garb of decent poverty, the same attitude of humble domestic service in which he had first found her. But he reflected that there was no accounting for tastes — and dismissed the matter from his thoughts.

So Mariuccia's brave inventions about the Brockmann relations had materialized at last. No wonder that the Professor's attention was attracted to Giannella. Even Mariuccia would have appeared less forbidding in his eyes had she suddenly inherited money. As for Giannella, he honestly wondered that he had never noticed before that she was young and beautiful; now that he had time to think of it, he remembered with what good-natured readiness she had waited on him and worked for him; something like a real affec-



tion stirred in his heart. It began to reach out for its rights in comradeship and sympathy, and he permitted himself to look forward to the more cheerful aspects of advancing years which he had seen others enjoy but had as yet not provided for himself. If self was the central motive of his actions at this juncture, at least his feelings towards the girl were as warm and kind as his strange nature would permit; and he contemplated, as he thought, no injury to her; her interests would be carefully safeguarded in case of his dying first, and in the meantime he was doing her a benefit by preventing her from squandering her money. So quickly does self-deception do its work that in a few days after he made up his mind to marry her he had persuaded himself that he would have done so long ago had not common prudence barred the way. No man with a sense of duty would take a portionless bride, of course. But since that reproach had fallen from her, dear, pretty sweet-tempered Giannella would make an excellent wife and do him credit, since, probably on account of the regard felt for himself, she had received a decent education. She had much to thank him for, he reflected, and he was glad that in the recent manifesto of his intentions, so rudely received by her, he had not permitted her to forget her obligations to him. Her unwillingness in no way affected his calm conviction that he would carry his point in the end, but there was no time to be lost. Giannella was within a few weeks of her twenty-first birthday, and Bianchi, who, though he had no particular impatience to enter heaven, was



mightily afraid of hell, knew that unless she and her money had been lawfully and irrevocably confined to his keeping before that date he must either become a common thief or hand over her fortune to her as soon as she came of age.

And then — good-bye pretty money, good-bye pretty Giannella. Mariuccia and the Curato, and the honest gossips of the neighborhood would find a pious, honest young man with a fortune more or less equal to hers; there would be a wedding, and confetti, and a drive round the Villa Borghese in a livery carriage; and the Professor would return to his defrauded home and have to watch Mariuccia court a painful death by devouring fifteen baiocchi's worth of food a day all to herself. No, these wrongs must not be. The foolish women should know nothing of defunct Scandinavian uncles until the unconscious heiress was safely ticketed as a prudent man's wife. Then how pleased they would be if he spent a few pauls of Giannella's money in taking them out of a Sunday afternoon to one of the osterias beyond the gates where wine and maccheroni were so good and cheap!

But he told himself again that there was no time to lose if all his pleasant dreams were to be realized. He had not counted on the girl's resistance; it had caused him a painful surprise to find that any young woman should be so devoid of proper feeling, should show such a complete lack of gratitude for past benefits and those which he now proposed to confer. Of course Mariuccia had much to do with it. Opposition from her he had expected; it was not to be



supposed that she would relish the idea of having to look upon Giannella as her mistress. The "stultus vulgus" was always so jealous and suspicious. And unfortunately Mariuccia's was a strong character in a vulgar way. The kind-hearted Professor acknowledged to himself that it would cost him many struggles to break down the combined resistance of two obstinate women, and that discomfort would be added to conflict in the process, since the ordering of his daily life was in their hands. He must find an ally of their own sex, one sufficiently imposing to awe them into good behavior. Who so fitted to speak with authority as the Princess, to whom Giannella owed so much gratitude and respect? He would lay the facts — with a few insignificant reservations — before the great lady and beg her to intervene for the good of the orphan in whom she had taken such benevolent interest a few years ago.

Rather resenting the necessity of wasting time over these details when that thrilling discovery of the Cardinal's awaited his inspection, he presented himself at the Princess's door and sent in his card with the respectful request that her Excellency would grant him a short interview on a matter of great importance. He spent some trying moments in the visitor's waiting-room, in uncertainty as to the result of his application, and was greatly relieved when informed that the Princess would have the pleasure of seeing him.

Teresa Santafede was a good deal harassed at this time by domestic matters; she missed her faithful Elena Dati more every day; Onorato was distressing



her deeply by still evading the charms and chains of matrimony; her health seemed breaking down, she began to feel old and to lose confidence in herself. A mistake had been made somewhere; life had proved unruly and would not fit into the frame she had made for it. Still she was alert to the call of duty, and never sent away any person who had a right to see her. This wearisome Professor evidently wanted something. She hoped it could be quickly and reasonably granted him — ask him to walk in.

All her sense of duty could not disarm her manner of a certain stiffness, the outcome of the nobles' deep-seated hereditary antagonism to the middle class, the class which once furnished hundreds of clients to every great patrician and is now independent of patronage yet still mean, obscure, envious yet critical, nameless but ubiquitous, carrying on its colorless existence entirely apart from their illuminated sphere. A chasm of separation from her visitor was disclosed in the Princess's slight, formal bow, and as Bianchi gingerly sat down on the edge of a chair opposite her sofa, and dropped his hat and gloves on the floor, his heart sank a little, not from any sense of inferiority — the Romans are not snobs — but simply because the atmosphere was not one of success. He was, however, conscious of the justice of his cause, and after an opening speech, in which he reminded his hearer of her former benevolence to a certain orphan girl, unfolded his case with a good deal of tact and plausibility. As he went on, the Princess became first interested, then sympathetic. The undoubted benefit of such a mar-



riage for a friendless young woman was evident. Suppose, said Bianchi, that he or his old servant were to die? In what an impossible position would Giannella find herself! Could she remain in his home without a respectable female's companionship? Could she, in case of his own demise (here the Princess made a polite gesture of deprecation), be cast on the world, young and attractive as she was, with only an aged peasant to protect her from its snares and temptations? The Excellency must surely see that Giannella's only safety lay in a respectable marriage, and the speaker's good heart, yearning over the girl's future, had prompted him to throw himself into the breach.

The moment the word "temptation" sounded in her ears the Princess's conscience hurled itself to the rescue of a soul in danger, just as the nearest surgeon hastens to give first aid to the victim of a street accident. Likes or dislikes, youthful romance or aged prejudice, all must be swept aside to preserve the innocent and convert the sinful. Safety awaited Giannella (whose existence had for some time escaped the Princess's overburdened memory) as the wife of the good, disinterested man who seemed to have put his own feelings out of the question and to be pleading her cause alone with fine singleness of heart.

"I see. Yes, I agree with you," the hostess said, bowing slightly to show that the interview was ended. "Send the girl to me, and let the servant accompany her. I will speak to Giannella alone, and will then have a few words with the old woman, who can only be acting from jealous and unworthy motives in thus



opposing a marriage which, in spite of a trifling difference of age, offers such advantages to that unfortunate orphan. I am not at all surprised at the servant's conduct. The common people are always ignorant and stubborn, but they can see reason when it is explained to them. I have generally found our *contadini* tractable. Excuse me for mentioning such a thing — but I suppose there is no secret attachment, no foolish love affair which is causing Giannella to behave so strangely? That is quite impossible, is it not?"

"Quite impossible, Excellency," the Professor declared. "We have brought her up most strictly, have never let her out of our sight. I can assure you that she has never spoken to a young man in her life!"

Had the Princess become more human with the passing years? A gleam of amused pity touched her eyes and mouth; but she replied gravely: "That is as it should be. I shall expect her to-morrow then at ten o'clock. I am leaving for Santafede at twelve and shall not return to Rome till October. It was fortunate, Signor Professore, that you came to-day." Bianchi bowed himself out with effusive thanks. As he went on his way to keep his interesting appointment with the Cardinal, his appearance was one of such elation that a student who belonged to his class at the university laughingly pointed him out to his two companions, Rinaldo Goffi and Peppino Sacchetti. "There goes old 'brontolone' (grumbler) Bianchi, boys," he said, "just look at him. I never saw him so happy before. He might have won a *terno* in the



lottery! But I am sure it is nothing more than a copper picked up in the street — or another mouldy old statue discovered in a cabbage patch. What things some men do stick for stars in their sky!”

“Is that Professor Bianchi?” asked Rinaldo, looking after the receding figure with sudden interest. “Capperi! He is no beauty!”

“Who is, at that age?” laughed Peppino, and he began to hum, “*La gioventu é un fiore, che presto se ne vá.*”

But Rinaldo did not laugh. A chance phrase of the sacristan of San Severino came back to his mind. “Now that she is big and pretty, they say he means to marry her.” He had hardly thought of it again. Giannella’s eyes, Giannella’s smile, had told him that he had no rivals; but the insolence of the Professor’s pretensions suddenly kindled him to a fury of resentment. That sallow, hook-nosed, round-shouldered old fellow would dare to approach her, was trying to wrap the cobwebs of his ugly age round her sweet freshness? For the first time in his life Renaldo felt a passionate hatred fasten on his heart and pump the lust of murder through his veins. He was standing rooted to the spot, gazing at the entrance to Palazzo Cestadini, through which the Professor had disappeared.

“Come on, Nalduccio,” said Peppino, shaking him by the arm, “what on earth is the matter? You look as if you had seen the Lupo Manaro.”

“I wish it would catch him,” growled Rinaldo, turning to his friends with such an expression that they drew back from him in horror. “May he and all his



best dead be the werewolf's food forever. No, I shall not come to the river. The sight of that antipatico Professor of yours has upset me. It will be more prudent to go home and take a dose of medicine than to go for a cold swim after such an emotion."

"Is it as bad as that?" inquired Peppino with affectionate concern. "Poveraccio, perhaps he has the evil eye?" and he fingered the coral horn on his watch chain as he pronounced the fatal word. "If so, why, I think I will come with you. This meeting might bring us bad luck on the river. It is a Friday, too. Yes, I will go back with you, Rinaldo."

"Stuff and nonsense!" exclaimed the third member of the party, the irreverent student who had drawn attention to Bianchi; "I and thirty others have been attending his lectures for the last year, and nothing has happened to us. He is as ugly as hungry, and as tiresome as the Latin in a sermon, but as for the other thing, I never heard that he was accused of it. What a couple of superstitious young donkeys you are!"

"That is all very well," retorted Peppino, "but when the mere sight of a man makes such an impression as that — are you feeling worse, Nalduccio?" he inquired hastily, seeing the artist's face screwing itself up into a frightful grimace — "it is folly, even impiety, to disregard it. Come along, Rinaldo, we will stop at the apothecary's and get him to prescribe for you, and I will come and sit with you till you feel better."



### CHAPTER XIII

THE Professor had a delightful hour with Cardinal Cestaldini, an hour during which personal preoccupations ceased to exist. The Cardinal, indeed, never seemed to have any of these; his bland, benevolent, well-ordered existence left no loophole for worry, the cipher word which expresses in five letters regrets for the past, irritation in the present, and anxiety concerning the future. Whatever the occupation of the moment might be, he came to it gladly and preparedly, knew that it was either obligatory or legitimate, and turned from it to the next without haste, without delay, without a jarring note in the harmonious modulations by which his spirit passed from key to key, from the inner sanctuaries of prayer and contemplation to the apostolic publicity of his sacerdotal and hierarchical functions, the fulfillment of every duty as a priest and a prince of the Church; and again from these to the intellectual and artistic enjoyments which provided the recreation necessary to preserve the elasticity of his well-balanced mind.

He enjoyed few things, in a minor way, more than his occasional conversations with Carlo Bianchi. Those were the days when the new archæology was in its infancy, when the ground had been barely broken over the rich depths of the second Rome, although its more visible remains everywhere met the eye, built



into palace and basilica or standing up in sun-stained beauty of colonnade and temple, amphitheater or triumphal arch. The first Rome lay still buried, still undreamed of, far beneath the second, in its cerement of soil, so closely spaded in by time that it served to bear the enormous weight of the Imperial city, which in its turn supported Roma Terza, the Rome of the middle ages and the popes. And every particle of that fine black soil had been soaked in blood whirled by tempest, fused by fire; had incorporated with itself uncounted thousands of human bodies, falling like living grain in the swathe of the invader, who dropped into it in his turn and was gathered to his enemy, hate to hate, Etruscan to Latin, Latin to Roman, Roman to Barbarian, as Fortune flung the numbers from her ever blood-bright wheel.

Perhaps some prophetic thrill of discovery was in the air already when Carlo Bianchi came to examine and discuss the Cardinal's fragment of inscription that sultry July afternoon. The strangely archaic lettering, the almost unintelligible elementariness of the few Latin words, threw the two interpreters of antiquity into a state of excitement most unusual to both of them. Their hearts warmed to this mutilated ancestor of history, separated from all catalogued relics by some great chasm of time; the Cardinal smiled like a boy and fingered the pitted stone as if it had been a flower; the Professor's hands trembled so that he had to take three rubbings before he could get a satisfactory impression of the treasure. Could they but find the rest! What might it not reveal! Ah, it might be



far away, if not already ground to powder or built into the foundations of some ponderous mausoleum. Well, they could but search. The Professor, forgetful of all else, was for descending then and there to the vast vaults which lay beneath the palace; remains of huge nameless ruins which had been utilized as foundations for a fortress in mediæval times, a stronghold which had in its turn been shorn away and its materials built into the stately Renaissance dwelling erected by one of the Cardinal's ancestors to mark the accession of his family to power.

"Let me descend to this fortunate Avernus at once, Eminenza," Bianchi pleaded. "Who knows but that the workmen in their ignorance may destroy that which we so desire to find?"

"No, amico," replied the prelate, "there is no fear of that. All work was stopped at once when the foreman brought this to me, as he does every fragment of marble which is turned up by his men. They have gone away now. I would not have another spade struck into the earth until I should have consulted you. But you must not visit the place now; it is always damp, and especially unsafe at this hour, after the heat of the day. The chill would strike to the bone — would you invite an ague? No, if you will favor me by coming in the morning, having fortified yourself with a little quinine, and, speaking with respect, with a flannel vest, I will perhaps be so selfish as to accept your kind offer, though I shall appear to you as a coward, for I have caught a slight cold and dare not run the risk of accompanying you. It is like



stepping into a cold bath. Indeed, much as I wish to discover more, my conscience tells me that you would do better to trust Michele, the foreman, who is most obedient and intelligent, to go carefully over the ground himself, to a permitted depth. Every atom of stone could be brought here for your inspection. We should lose nothing, I am sure."

The Cardinal spoke with all the emphasis he could muster, but there was a wistful entreaty in his eyes, in the very tones of his voice, as if he were unselfishly imploring some hero of romance not to lead a forlorn hope to the rescue of one dear to him.

The Professor, carried out of himself by true enthusiasm, was about to reply that nothing should deter him from personally continuing the search the following morning, when an old servant stole into the room and stood waiting beside his master's chair for permission to speak.

"What is it, Domenico?" the Cardinal inquired, looking up at him with a friendly smile.

"Eminenza," the man replied, "the avvocato De Sanctis is here. He says that he has brought the papers of the Ariccia property. If the Eminenza would condescend to sign them this evening he could go out and conclude the affair to-morrow. But if it is inconvenient —"

"Not at all!" replied the master. "Ask him to come in. A busy man like that must not be made to lose his time." Then, as the servant retired, he turned to Bianchi with gentle apology. "You will pardon the interruption, my friend? The business will occu-



py but a few moments. De Sanctis — but what is the matter? Are you indisposed?”

The Professor had risen unsteadily to his feet, at the same time turning sickly pale. De Sanctis! The last person he wished to meet or to have reminded of his existence till after the little ceremony which was to take place in three weeks! Distractedly he looked towards the door. He must fly — but he would be flying into the lawyer's arms. Well, better do that, and rush past him, than risk any polite inquiry as to how the excitable Signorina Brockmann was enjoying spending her abundant pocket money. There would be explanations — why keep such a pretty story a secret? The Cardinal would see his sister before long and would rally her on the fine good luck of her old protégée; and if the Princess came to know of that, after his own high-sounding protestations of disinterestedness that very afternoon — heavens, what a feast for carrion crows would the corpse of Carlo Bianchi's reputation become! The mere thought made him\* feel cold and sick.

“I must beg your Eminence to excuse me,” he found voice to stammer, “a slight indisposition — pray incommode no one,” for the Cardinal's hand was on his bell; “it will pass in the open air. With permission of the Eminenza I remove the inconvenience of my presence.”

Scarcely waiting to hear his host's expressions of regret, he hurried from the room just in time to brush past De Sanctis, with averted face, in the curtained shadow of the next deep doorway. How he



prayed that the sharp-eyed young man might not recognize him, might not, remembering the facts, entertain the kindhearted Cardinal with the story of a poor orphan, once the beneficiary of his noble sister's charity, who had, in the twinkling of an eye, become quite a little heiress in a modest way.

De Sanctis, intent on accomplishing his business, paid small attention to the outgoing visitor. When he had kissed the Cardinal's ring, and was preparing to spread his documents on the table, he carelessly pushed aside the three-cornered fragment of marble which was so precious in the eyes of the prelate.

"Take care, Guglielmo," cried the latter, putting out both hands to save his treasure, "that stone is more valuable to me than all the Ariccia property."

"Pardon my blindness, Eminenza," said De Sanctis. "Is this a new gem to add to the great collection?" There was a touch of amusement in his tone which jarred on the Cardinal's ear.

"You could not be expected to appreciate its value," he replied with gentle dignity; "that is for specialists like myself and Professor Bianchi. He suspects that it antedates all existing inscriptions by at least three hundred years. An account of it will appear in next month's *Archæological Review*." He wrapped the thing in a red silk handkerchief and signed to De Sanctis to deposit it on another table.

The lawyer obeyed in respectful silence; then he dipped the pen in the ink, handed it to his employer, shook the sand over the delicate pointed signatures on the three sheets and laid them together.



The Cardinal looked up at him with a little smile, saying, "You are very quiet to-day, my son. Did I reproach you too sharply for not sharing my little enthusiasms? You must forgive me. We old fellows are apt to grow querulous, you know."

"But, Eminenza, what an idea!" exclaimed De Sanctis in shocked protest. "No indeed. I fear my mind had wandered from the matter in hand. The mention of Professor Bianchi had set me thinking. I apologize for my bad manners."

"You know the Professor?" the Cardinal asked. "Ah, I have a great respect for him. Such deep learning and such simple modesty of character are rarely met with."

De Sanctis bowed in acquiescence. "I have only the honor of a slight acquaintance with him," he replied, "but doubtless your Eminence's discernment is not mistaken. Indeed I believe he hardly meets his due, in general, for public opinion accuses him of avarice — and I have caught him, red-handed, in a long-continued work of charity."

The Cardinal's eyes shone with the light of that lovely virtue and he leaned forward eagerly. "But this is delightful," he said, "tell me all about it. How consoling it is to hear of good deeds done in secret!"

"I will relate the facts with pleasure, Eminenza," the other answered. "Since they only redound to Professor Bianchi's credit, I think I shall not be guilty of any betrayal of confidence in doing so." And then he told the story of how a forsaken child had been cared for during her infancy by a kind-



hearted gentleman; how when the burden became too heavy for him, the listener's most excellent sister had sent the child to school for nine years; how at the end of that time she had returned to the archæologist, who had received her as his own daughter (De Sanctis was convinced the Professor's daughter would have had to work quite as hard as Giannella, and he was merely repeating the facts as he had learned them from Bianchi himself); how Bianchi had kept her under his roof ever since, shielding her from all care and temptation; how the girl had unexpectedly inherited a competency which in her rank of life entitled her to make a good marriage — and how happy all this had made her benefactor. All that was wanting now was the appearance of a good, suitable young man to complete the family circle.

The Cardinal had completely forgotten his own intervention in the matter of Giannella's education and his defense of Bianchi from Fra Tommaso's reproaches at that time; he had received and attended to several scores of like applications in the last fourteen years, and never gave such things another thought when his part was done, so he beamed approbation at the lawyer's narrative. Many sad stories, he said, came to his ears, but few such encouraging ones. Did the Princess know of it? If not, he would give himself the pleasure of telling her; and as for the good young man — he laid his hand for a moment on that of De Sanctis — if the girl was sweet and virtuous, why should she not make the right wife for him? It



was time he chose a partner for life. His own circumstances were prosperous, his future assured; and a good Christian wife would be a great comfort and assistance to him. The Cardinal believed in the wisdom of fairly early marriages, and De Sanctis, who had his own views on the subject, had to listen submissively to a discourse full of eloquence and sweetness on the benefits accruing to society and the individual from the experience and example of a Christian union.

“Your Eminence rates me too high,” he said, when at last he could interrupt the persuasive periods. “I am a poor selfish devil, set on rising in my profession, and I have come to the conclusion that I can do that best as a bachelor. Indeed I am not sure that a lawyer has much more right to get married than a priest.”

“And why not?” inquired the Cardinal, rather shocked at this unconventional proposition.

“Because,” De Sanctis replied with his sardonic little smile, “he acts as a kind of father confessor to the public. And though the public is quite ready to confide its innocent little secrets to him, it does not care about having them shared with his pretty wife, who is sure to be as curious as Eve and as talkative as a parrot. No, Eminenza, I cannot afford to take on such a responsibility just yet. Eve was doubtless a great comfort and pleasure to Adam in Paradise — but she never rested till she got him turned out. She must have been more than woman if she did not reproach him for the catastrophe afterwards — and he



must have been more than man if he did not frequently wish that he had been allowed to enjoy a peaceful existence alone."

The Cardinal was laughing now, but his sermon was not ended. "You are incorrigible, my son," he said, "but your fine philosophy will go to pieces when you find yourself old and lonely and miserably rich — with no child to inherit your money, no one to care whether you are ill or well, alive or dead. Then you will have to follow Professor Bianchi's example and adopt an orphan on whom to expend your natural goodness of heart. However, I forgive your recalcitrancy this time, for the sake of the charming story you told me. Good-bye — take care of yourself when you go into the country to-morrow. The weather is 'bisbetico' — capricious just now. I fancy the rains are at hand. Arrivederci."

•        •        •        •        •        •        •  
"It was a pretty story," De Sanctis said to himself as he walked home through the darkening streets where the few oil lamps were winking bravely under the onslaughts of the hot, moist wind, the scirocco that caresses at one moment and sears in the next. "It was certainly a pretty story and I told it to that saintly man just as it was told to me. But — oh, you are a sad liar, Guglielmo mio," and he tapped his own forehead reproachfully, "for you know that in your heart you don't believe a word of it — the Professor's part of it at least. When the wolf divides its food with the lamb, then we can begin to talk about such a phenom-



enon. Diamini, here is the rain — and I have forgotten my umbrella.”

The Professor returned to his home less gaily than he had quitted it. He seemed to have little appetite for his supper; Mariuccia heard him go out for a short time afterwards, and when he returned soon after ten, he seemed more cheerful, but still looked pale and tired. “He has caught another chill,” she mournfully told herself, “I let him go out too soon, stupid creature that I was. Oh, San Giuseppe mio, are these troubles never to finish?”

Bianchi had had a critical question to settle. Was it — or was it not — safe to send Giannella to the Princess? He had little doubt that the latter would gain his point for him with the girl; Giannella had till now been singularly amenable to authority. Now that it seemed necessary to analyze it, her temperament, he decided, was a cold one; all northerners were like that; difficult to rouse, too sluggish to fight long, though tiresomely obstinate when some prejudice was in question. This was the first time she had ever attempted to oppose her will to that of her elders; it was a whim; it would pass. The scirocco had been blowing for several days — that probably accounted for it. Yes, she had always been a docile little thing, giving no trouble at all; he had no fear of the upshot if the Princess spoke to her as, a few hours since, she had promised to speak. But there was that one small but hideous possibility that De Sanctis — an apoplexy to him — might have told the Cardinal of Giannella’s



good luck, and that the Cardinal, in some caprice of amused benevolence, might, before to-morrow morning, have related the same to his sister. He sometimes paid her a visit in "prima sera," the early evening, always reserved for intimates; and some demon might prompt him to come to-night to wish her a pleasant journey to the country. All these possibilities were of the slightest kind, yet the mere shadow of them was desperately disturbing. If none of them became facts, all would go smoothly. To-morrow the Princess would depart for her annual villeggiatura at Santafede, forty miles away to the north, and when she returned in October she and her brother would have forgotten all about Giannella Brockmann's unimportant destinies, and, if they should ever hear or think of her, would never raise the question of whether it was before or after the twenty-fifth of July that she had inherited the forty thousand scudi which would seem a trifle to personages like them, but the mere possession of which would bring joy unspeakable to poor unobtrusive Carlo Bianchi.

So he walked up and down his room in a fever of suspense, looking out of his window every moment to see if the Cardinal's carriage were coming up the street from the Ripetta; then he would turn and look at the clock. If once the hands touched ten and the Cardinal had not come, he knew that he was safe. It wanted twenty minutes yet of that magic hour. Ah, there was a rumble of wheels. Again he was at the window, peering down at something going by, a heavy carriage apparently. He cursed his short sight, and



the wretchedly dim light below, for he could not make out the details. As the vehicle turned the corner and disappeared into the piazza his heart stood still and a sudden rage possessed him. He must know if that carriage had entered the porte cochère, if it belonged to the Cardinal.

He snatched up his hat and cloak and went downstairs as rapidly as he dared, for the lights were few and the stone steps damp and slippery from the scirocco. At last he was safely out under the colonnade. Heaven be praised, the courtyard was empty. No hearse-like vehicle was standing at the far end waiting for its occupant. He walked the length of the colonnade and made sure that it was not under shelter at the entrance to the Princess's apartment. As he reached the spot, the clock in the porter's lodge struck ten, and the man came out, yawning, to close the great doors for the night. No music had ever sounded sweeter in the Professor's ears than those thin metallic strokes; the fat porter in his shirt sleeves running the bolts home in their stanchions was a bright, beneficent being shutting the demons of ill-luck out into the darkness. Glad at heart, at peace with all the world, Carlo Bianchi climbed the long stairs and regained his room. Now indeed he could go to sleep.



## CHAPTER XIV

GIANNELLA was amazed at learning the next morning that she and Mariuccia were to wait on the Princess at ten o'clock. Bianchi called her into the study to give her the message, without any explanation or comment. Mariuccia had followed her to the door and listened attentively at the keyhole, so she had little to learn when the girl came out, grasped her arm excitedly, and dragged her back to the kitchen. There they stood and stared at one another in dumb perplexity. Mariuccia threw up her hands at last and turned away, as if giving the problem up.

Then Giannella broke out in agitated whispers: "What does it mean? She forgets all about us for three years at least — and now, just as she is going away, we are to be sure to go to her at ten o'clock. It must be something very extraordinary. Everything is in a bustle down there; they were packing the traveling carriages already when I went out to Mass. What can she want of us?"

"Better ask Pasquino,"<sup>1</sup> Mariuccia replied with a

<sup>1</sup> The mutilated statue which served as a gazette of public opinion. All lampoons, caricatures, etc. were pasted on the pedestal in the night, and there was generally a little crowd gathered round it in the morning. The questions were affixed to another torso called Marforio, near by, and "Pasquino" displayed the answers.



toss of the head, "I don't know. Perhaps the Princess means to take you to the country with her."

"That is very likely, is it not?" retorted Giannella, her eyes flashing with sudden wrath, "after banishing me from her presence — for nothing — all these years! I wish she had left me alone in the beginning. Why didn't you all let me be a servant, earning my living like other girls, poor like me, and not made miserable by being educated above their wretched station in life? What good did the reading and writing, the designing and embroidery, ever do me? Here I am, a grown woman, still as dependent as a baby or an idiot. No, I am not grateful to the Princess. If she began, she should have finished. I could do for her what dear Signora Dati, of good memory, did — I could write her letters and save her many steps, many annoyances — I could have been useful to her or some other lady. That was what Signora Dati meant for me — she told me so once. But no. The Princess takes a dislike to me, and I am dropped out of sight. I would not take one step for her now. I will not go down this morning."

By this time Giannella's cheeks were flaming and tears of anger were brimming in her eyes. She stood, tense and panting, her hands behind her, the incarnation of sudden revolt. Mariuccia was appalled. The revelation of slow secret suffering would have grieved her to the heart at any other time, but now it was swallowed up in horror at the audacity of the girl's declaration. Not obey the commands of a Cestaldini, of Mariuccia's own Princess, the greatest per-



sonage in her world except the Holy Father himself! And then, this outburst of black ingratitude, why, it was like Lucifer rebelling against the Divine mandates! The stern old peasant felt that she must conquer this demon of insurrection on the spot. She came and put both her hands on Giannella's shoulders and looked her straight in the eyes. The hands felt heavy as flatirons, but the girl stiffened her shoulders under their weight, and the gray eyes were bright and burning, for all the tears, as they met the angry black ones.

"You sometimes say that I have been like a mother to you," Mariuccia began, her deep masculine tones rumbling like approaching thunder. "Do you know what I would do if I were really your mother? For all that you are long and large, I would take that little stick over there," she pointed to a broomstick in the corner, "and give you a beating you would never forget. That is how we teach obedience and respect in the Castelli. But because you are not my child — though God knows I have loved you as if you were —" The voice choked and a dimness came over the old eyes that still never flinched from their steady, reproachful gaze.

Then Giannella's arms were flung round her neck, and the golden head was buried on her shoulder, and the young heart was weeping out its storm of love and sorrow and remorse against the old one.

"Mariuccia mia," she sobbed, "you have been an angel to me, and I am a wretch, an ingrate, but I love you. It was not true, not a single word. I will do



anything you wish, anything — even go down to the Princess.”

“What are you about, you females?” cried a sharp voice in the passage. “Do you know that it is half-past nine? Make haste and get ready to go to her Excellency.” Then the study door was slammed impatiently. Evidently the master was not in a good temper this morning.

When the two women presented themselves at the Princess’s door at five minutes to ten, Giannella was led away alone, and Mariuccia, much against her will, left to wait in the anteroom. All Giannella’s rage had evaporated by this time and the old awe, the sense of being dominated by greater powers, stole over her as she followed the attendant through the series of remembered rooms, silent and splendid, darkened to keep out the heat, and pleasantly cool compared with the burning air of the courtyard outside. She recalled her first childish impression that the place must be a church; then, sooner than she expected it, she found herself standing before the Princess in the same old attitude of frightened submission. She knew that she would do whatever was required of her if the regal black-robed woman in the great chair by the table had any commands to issue. She had no particular curiosity now as to what they might prove to be; she only felt the oppressive weight of authority made visible.

But the command, when it came, gave her a most disagreeable shock. The Princess, with the gravity of a judge summing up the case against a prisoner,



opened her discourse by stating the facts. An honorable proposal had been made to Giannella by the kind and upright gentleman to whom she already owed so much, and the judge was grieved to learn that it had been met in a most unsuitable spirit. No opening was given to the prisoner in which to express any private opinion, no loophole in the argument permitted escape from the logical conclusion — namely, that a young girl alone in the world was committing a great sin in refusing the protection of a Christian husband. Such a course could only point to one thing, an innate levity of character (the Princess, remembering her former apprehensions about Onorato, looked sternly condemnatory as she said this), a levity which, unchecked, must end in a disastrous downward career. She spoke of the horrible temptations to which needy and unprotected young women are exposed, warned her listener of the abominable designs harbored by men who tried to make poor girls believe that they admired them; contrasted Signor Bianchi's honorable behavior with that of such base deceivers; and finally asked Giannella to contemplate the picture of her own destiny should the Professor, justly incensed at her ingratitude, refuse her in future the shelter of his roof.

The speaker felt that this was not a time to mince matters, and she made her meaning so cruelly clear, that Giannella, who had never had her attention drawn to the degraded aspects of human nature, was overwhelmed with shame and horror, and found it impossible to control the flood of tears which rose to her eyes. The Princess, seeing that she had gained her



point with the girl, sent for Mariuccia, who had been fuming in the anteroom for three-quarters of an hour. When she made her appearance, Giannella was standing beside the big chair, still weeping bitterly; the Princess was holding her hand quite kindly. The prisoner had repented, and was now to be forgiven in form.

“There is nothing to cry about now, my child,” the judge was saying; “you are naturally sorry for having shown yourself so ungrateful and unamiable to the good man who has done so much for you and only asks to do more. But now you understand things better — how exceedingly fortunate it is for you, who have no relations and no dowry, to find an honest Christian husband to protect you from the dangers I have been describing and which would certainly assail you if you were left alone in the world. Now go home and tell Signor Bianchi that you will do your best to be a good wife to him. Believe me, respect is a better foundation for happiness in matrimony than any sentimental affection such as young people sometimes permit themselves to dream of. Heaven will grant you the necessary graces for fulfilling your duty in the married state; and here is a little present” — the Princess picked up a closed envelope from the table and put it into Giannella’s hand — “with which you can buy your wedding dress — you had better get a black silk, it will be useful to you afterwards. Now wait outside while I speak with this good woman a moment.”

Giannella, too much overcome to say a word, kissed the extended hand and withdrew to digest her misery in the outer room while Mariuccia should receive her



own particular scolding. Giannella's world had slipped from under her feet. Even her trust in Rinaldo was shaken. As for speaking of him — her adored, beautiful Rinaldo — to the terrible Princess — she felt that it would have been easier and quite as useful to jump out of the window. Perhaps he was in reality like the wicked men of whose existence she had shudderingly learned; but that was hard to believe. Only that morning he had looked at her with such a light of truth in his dark eyes, had told her so joyfully about the big picture — and then, with such poignant regret, that the purchaser was leaving in a few days and insisted on its being completed, so that every moment of daylight must go to it, and Rinaldo feared he could not even come to Mass till next Sunday. Would Giannella remember to pray for him till then? He would be needing it so badly. And Giannella had laughingly replied that the next day was Sunday, when he must certainly come and pray for himself. And on that they had shaken hands for the first time. It was like sealing a compact. And when his fingers touched hers he had opened his lips as if to speak — and had kept back the words with an evident effort. Oh, she knew what they would have been. But of course he was too honorable to let them pass his lips before he had Mariuccia's sanction. Did Mariuccia dream of anything? Was it possible that she was even now making out some kind of a case for her wretched Giannella against the plausible, desirable, unendurable Professor? What a time she was in there! And then the door opened and Mariuccia came towards



her with averted eyes and a silent shake of the head, and Giannella saw that all was lost. Her only ally had succumbed, like herself. Who were they, poor women of the people, to argue or reason with authority in high places?

They returned home silently, Giannella too sick at heart to discuss the sentence which destiny seemed to have passed upon her, and Mariuccia so angry with everything and everybody that she was ferociously sulky all day. The Professor wisely stayed away till the evening, so as to give the Princess's admonitions time to sink in. When he came back for supper, expecting to find Giannella all submission and repentance, he was curtly informed that she was not well and had been sent to bed. And Mariuccia would not tell him a single word of what had taken place at the interview of the morning. What was more, he caught a glimpse of a magnificent pile of fruit and vegetables on the kitchen table (one of Rinaldo's now constant sendings from the vigna), and when his tray appeared it was disappointingly empty of what he considered his dues of the bounties which his servant's relatives seemed to have been sending her of late with such praiseworthy generosity. This symptom appeared to him most ominous. It could only indicate a most unusual state of things and pointed clearly to open revolt. Well, with the Princess away the worst danger had passed; he argued only good from Giannella's indisposition; she was preparing to meet him in the right spirit, and a few hours must be granted her in which to accustom her mind to the new dispensation.



Now for the article on the Cardinal's inestimable fragment.

Giannella herself could scarcely have catalogued her thoughts as she sat the next morning at the window of the workroom; she only knew that she wished to keep out of the padrone's way and that to this inner fortress he never ventured to penetrate. She had a headache and a heartache and felt quite ill enough to justify Mariuccia's statement. She almost hoped, with the delightful audacity of youth, that she was going to die. That appeared to be the shortest and most becoming way out of her troubles.

Just as she had reached this conclusion there was a shadow of wings on the window ledge, and then Themistocles alighted there, his head on one side and an alluring air of hope and mystery in his bearing. Giannella reached down for the little basket of grain which always stood under the work-table, and when she raised her head again the pigeon hopped in and began to peck from her hand. Suddenly she gave a little cry and leaned over to look closer. There was a bit of ribbon under the collar round his neck, and, peeping out from beneath one wing, a minute fold of paper. He had brought her a message from Rinaldo! With trembling fingers she untied the ribbon, and drew forth from its plumed resting-place a three-cornered note, which she opened in a tumult of happiness. The color flushed up to her temples and her eyes shone when she found a leaf of verbena pasted to the paper, and two words written beneath, "Amicizia eterna."

Eternal friendship! That was all he had dared to



say, but how much it meant. Love in the respectful dress of friendship — that meant eternal love. Giannella raised the little leaf to her cheek, smelt its delicate perfume, brought it to her lips and kissed it once, twice, a dozen times. Its fragrance seemed to speak of all happy things, it gave her back her courage, her buoyancy, her very life. Should she answer? Ah no, that would be too bold; besides, there was no word in her vocabulary that would express the delicate ecstasy that filled her heart. Yet she would send something — a leaf of the rose geranium there, sweet as the verbena itself, and meaning, as she remembered from old sentimental friendships at the convent, “Constancy under suffering.” There was nothing unmaidenly in that.

Her nimble fingers, still so white and fine, gathered the leaf, folded it in thin paper, and attached it to the ribbon. Themistocles was busily engaged on the Indian corn when she tied it on. Having picked up the last grain he perched for a moment on the window ledge, glanced this way and that, then flung himself off into the quivering sunshot blue of the noon, rose, and flew steadily away over the monastery roof.

“You make me a liar!” exclaimed Mariuccia, coming in a few minutes later and looking at the suddenly recovered invalid with delighted astonishment. “I told the padrone you were ill.”

“So I am,” replied Giannella, laughing for joy, “too ill to see him to-day. Oh, Mariuccia, if you love me just a little let me stay in here. I cannot wait on the padrone this morning.”



“Rest easy, *figlia mia*, you shall not,” the old woman promised. “I told him you were hot and cold, and consumed with fever. You looked like that an hour or two ago, so I shall not get a sore tongue this time.”

“It is all true,” cried Giannella, “I burn with fever—but it is a good fever. I feel happy—I want to sing.”

“Better so,” growled the other; “since it seems you must marry him, I am glad you are pleased. It is another thing for me. I cannot say that I am. What has made you change your mind so suddenly? Are you thinking of the silk dress and the confetti?”

All the color left Giannella’s face and she gave a little cry. “*Madonna mia buona*, I had forgotten! Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do?” And she covered her eyes with her hands and rocked herself in her chair. She had forgotten—for a few happy moments—all that had gone before—the Princess’s manifesto, her own conviction while listening to it that there could be no right action in opposition to so much sense and piety—her remorse for her own selfishness and willfulness, the perception of the duty which stood unbendingly before her.

She rose and paced the narrow room, all her senses at war. Who could help her? Who would tell her which was right and to be obeyed—her own intense repulsion for Bianchi, strengthened a thousandfold by the upspringing of the new love, the first love, all unbaptized as yet, but drawing her with every chord of the spirit, every fiber of the flesh, to her natural



mate? or the fiat of those whom God had placed in authority over her, the Princess, the Professor? She thought of taking her case to her confessor, Padre Anselmo, over there at San Severino; but how could she lay it honestly before the dim-eyed old saint, who seemed already to be hovering so far above earth that he could only see things from above, as the angels see them? How could she bare her heart to him, confess that it had become a shrine of glory where a thousand love lamps burned round one worshiped picture, the picture of a man she had known but a few weeks and who had spoken no word to her or to her natural guardians to show that he meant to ask her in marriage?

She felt that she should die of shame if she had to tell that, for who would ever understand? In days gone by, before she had seen love's face, she had listened, first hopefully and then despondingly, to Mariuccia's prophecies about the good young husband who would come to seek for her. Then, marriage had presented itself as a mere change of state, very slightly connected with the shadowy wooer. She had never read a novel, never spoken with a person in love; the relations of husband and wife had been wrapped for her in the impenetrable veil so strongly insisted on in the Castelli, where girls at that time grew up to womanhood believing what their mothers told them—that the mere breath of man, a kiss or even a sigh, was all that was needed to make a maid a mother. Trusting to this complete impersonality of the married relation, it might have been possible for the Giannella of three



months earlier to bow her pretty head to fate and accept even Carlo Bianchi as a husband, had authority voiced its mandate then; but now, now the new music, new yet tenderly familiar, was sounding in her ears; life lay before her like an unblown rose that every hour of sunshine was kissing into bloom; a new Giannella had been born, and her every heart-beat cried aloud, "I will live, I will live."



## CHAPTER XV

FOR two days Rinaldo adhered to his resolution of spending all the daylight hours at his easel, but by the third morning his depression was so great that he resolved to resume the good habit of going to early Mass. He had made one or two trespassing excursions to Fra Tommaso's loggia in the hope of catching a glimpse of Giannella at her window; but her place was empty and there was a strange air of deadness, of unnatural orderliness about the few details of the room which came within his line of vision. At once a thousand fears assailed him. Was she ill? Had she gone away? Had his diffident little greeting brought trouble upon her? He had been wildly happy over her mute answer to it, but now he began to ponder as to whether it had not some hidden meaning which he, unversed in flower language, had perhaps not understood. He must find out at once. Very likely Sora Amalia could tell him. Women set store by these pretty mysteries, and although he could hardly imagine the stout mistress of the dairy as sending a love letter in flowers to its red-faced master, yet she had been young once, and probably very sentimental. He had heard that sentimental people were usually inclined to grow fat. He would run down and ask her, very guardedly of course, whether she could help him. And then he might get some tid-



ings of Giannella; she and Mariuccia called there almost every day for one thing or another.

So when evening drew on and the sun was sinking, a ball of smoldering fire, behind heavy clouds in the west, Rinaldo said good-night to the pink-cheeked cardinal and descended to the shop, where darkness would have reigned already but for one smoky lamp. The heat inside was suffocating, and Sora Amalia, as she put things in order for the night, mopped her heated face with the corner of a long-suffering apron which seemed to have been applied to many and alien uses during the day. The good woman brightened up at the sight of a customer so late and bustled about joyfully to get the eggs and cheese which Rinaldo made the pretext for his visit.

"The signorino does his own cooking?" she inquired; "that must be a great trouble. It is all to his advantage in one way, of course, since he would never get such miraculously fresh stuff as this at a trattoria. But it must make many steps, much work — and in this hot weather too."

"It saves me four hot walks a day," Rinaldo replied, "and also much money. Those trattori are all brigands. They have an art, most diabolical, of dressing up coarse food in disguising sauces and giving it grand names. It is like a veglione in carnival — you never know what is really under the mask. I am sure I have many a time eaten goat's flesh and paid for lamb."

"Of course you have," said Sora Amalia sympa-



thetically. "Poverino! What you want is a nice clever little wife to see to things for you. Has your good Signora Mamma not chosen one for you yet?"

"My Signora Mamma is a long way off," Rinaldo answered, "and, to tell you a secret, I mean to choose a wife for myself. How does one go about it, Sora Amalia? I am shy, and dreadfully afraid of making some young lady very angry by my stupidity. How did Sor Augusto begin when he wanted to make love to you?"

Sora Amalia crossed her arms over her ample bosom and meditated for a moment. "I am trying to remember," she said; "ah yes — he was in the pork trade in those days, and he sent me a paper of sausages. They were a cream! I ate them all, and, capperi, but I was ill afterwards!" She chuckled at the recollection.

This was a long way off from the language of flowers. Rinaldo tried another opening. "How sweet your carnations smell," he remarked, pulling one out of the glass and dangling it before his nose. "Garofoli — what does the name mean, I wonder?"

"Married happiness," she replied promptly. "Are you looking for numbers to play in the lotto?"

He caught at the idea. "Why yes, that is just what I do want. I thought of a little ambo for next Saturday."

"Benone, here is the book," and she pulled a ragged volume out from under the counter and held it close to the light. "I will find them for you. Here is the place. Garofolo, 81, you had better write it down."



Rinaldo gravely produced a pencil and scribbled on his cuff. "Now," she went on, "what is the second object?"

"I will have another flower," he said, "a geranium leaf blew on to my loggia this morning. Can you find the number for that?"

"Oh yes, here it is on the same page — geranium, 29 — odd numbers both. You will draw something, signorino."

"That which is to be, will be," he replied, "but has this one a bad meaning? That might bring me ill-luck."

Sora Amalia turned to an index at the end of the worn evangel of fortune and ran her finger down a list. "I don't know that you would call it bad exactly," she informed him, "but to me it smells of misfortune. 'Constancy under suffering.'"

"Madonna mia!" cried the young man with such distress in his voice that the woman looked up in surprise. He had changed color and was leaning heavily with both hands on the counter. His adviser hastened to comfort him.

"Come! come," she said soothingly, "do not let yourself be agitated. We will choose something else for you. Sora Rosa's chair broke down with her this morning and she went plump into a basket of cherries. A marmalade it was, when she got up! I will find the number for chair."

"No, no, I will not play in the lottery this week, Sora Amalia," and Rinaldo drew the book from her hand. "Listen, there is something else I want to ask



you. Did Sora Mariuccia come in this morning? I am wondering whether she got the fruit I told my vignarolo to take her yesterday. That poor man is of a stupidity sometimes."

"She said nothing about it to me," replied Sora Amalia, falling into the trap at once; "she seemed in a great hurry and pretty cross too. I asked her what was the matter, and she said Giannella was ill — oh, nothing serious, just the effect of the scirocco. Do not alarm yourself, signorino. Listen to a fool and I will tell you something." She leaned over and whispered in his ear, "It is probably a disease of the heart, and there is an easy remedy for it."

She looked so serious that Rinaldo caught her hand and cried:

"Tell me, what is it? I would walk a hundred miles to get it for her. What is the remedy?"

"A pound of sausages!" Sora Amalia broke into a peal of laughter. But Rinaldo fled, leaving his purchases behind him.

The next morning he came down to the church and hung about the street a little while in the hope of seeing Mariuccia, but she did not appear, and he climbed back to his studio and began work with a heavy heart. Later in the day he felt that he must have news of Giannella, and, reflecting that he had a perfect right to go and ask for them, even from the Professor himself, went boldly to the Palazzo Santafede and stood once more before the green door, this time with a beating heart and a certain hesitation as to ringing the bell. The notion of encountering the master of



the house was extremely repellent to him. Yet that was precisely what happened, for as he put his hand out towards the bell, the door opened and Bianchi emerged in a hurry, nearly knocking down the new arrival. As each started back with protests and apologies, their eyes met, and Rinaldo felt himself again possessed by the rampant antipathy he had experienced on his first view of the Professor. No reason is asked or given for such impressions in Rome. "Sympathy," "Antipathy," these terms cover everything, and to fight against the sentiments they inspire is equal to flying in the face of Providence. So the two men glared at each other for a moment, the usual conventionalities arrested on their lips. Then Bianchi inquired coldly, "What can I do to serve you?"

"If you will so far favor me, sir," Rinaldo replied, "I would wish to ask after the Signorina Giannella. I hear with deep regret that she is unwell."

A slow flush rose to the Professor's cheeks. Who was this good-looking, well-dressed young man, and what possible right had he to be interested in Giannella's health? What had been going on, that he should even know her name? A storm of suspicion and anger swept over him at the discovery of what could be nothing but some love intrigue, hidden from him by the women with abominable cunning. His gorge rose so that he could hardly reply with any show of self-restraint.

"I ought to be much obliged for this kind interest in a member of my family"—Bianchi had fairly good manners as a rule, but he could not keep a sneer



out of his tone — “especially as I have not the honor of knowing your respected name.” He paused, and Rinaldo, too angry to speak, drew a card from his pocket and held it out with a stiff bow. The other took it without glancing at it and continued, “I really cannot understand why the young lady’s health should concern a total stranger. Perhaps you will be so kind as to explain?”

He was still standing in the open doorway, and the impertinence of not asking the visitor to enter was too much for Rinaldo’s hot little temper. “I explain nothing to persons wanting in common civility,” he retorted; “I should like to speak with Sora Mariuccia.”

For an answer the Professor stepped back into the passage and slammed the door. Poor Giannella, lying on her bed at the other end of the house, gave a cry of alarm and pressed her hands to her aching temples. Mariuccia came down the passage to scold her bad boy. “Have you got no heart, padrone? Have I not told you that Giannella has fever, that she must be kept quiet? And there you go, slamming the door as if you wanted to bring these old walls down on our heads. Have a little consideration for that poor sick child.”

“Sick, indeed,” snarled Bianchi, worked up to a frenzy by his new suspicions; “don’t tell lies. There is nothing the matter with her but temper — and over-eating. You give her too much meat, and that young blood makes itself into fire at this season. And you spoil her and humor her, till she thinks she is the mistress of the house already. I’ll teach her better soon, and you too, and if you don’t care about the lesson



you can go and find another master. Do you understand?"

And he flung off into his study, slamming the door, this time with vicious satisfaction.

Mariuccia shook her fist at it. "I knew this was coming," she muttered. "You want to marry Giannella, so that she shall cook and wash and patch for you gratis, and be starved to death into the bargain. And I, who have served you twenty years and have saved you hundreds of scudi, besides nursing you when you were ill and telling everybody, for the honor of the house, fine Christian lies about your being such a good master — I am to be turned out on the pavement to go and beg for new service in my old age. No, Professore mio bello, that is not going to happen. Rest easy, my son, you will not marry a new cook and you will not get rid of the old one. Leave it to me."

Giannella was really ailing now; the improvement which had surprised Mariuccia had been short-lived. The summer was long and oppressive and the scirocco had hung over the city for weeks past, stifling and heavy, an invisible pall shutting off all freshness and sucking the life out of man and beast. The older people felt it less, but to the young it was a horrible trial; little children blanched and faded away; boys and girls moved listlessly and wearily; and to those in the full tide of their youthful vitality it was like a poison absorbed with every breath. Giannella, the child of northerners, had not the yielding wiriness of the Latin constitution. She fought against lassitude and rated



herself for idleness when, in the hot hours of the day, while three-quarters of the population was wisely taking its siesta, she tried task after task and dropped them all, from sheer fatigue. And now the troubles at home, the mysterious persecutions of the padrone, Mariuccia's only too natural breakdowns of temper — all these irritations on the one hand, and on the other the disturbing happiness of first love and the fear that it ought to be renounced — these things were too much for the white northern rose set to achieve its growth in the hot south, and Giannella broke down. Fever and its attendant demon, headache, had fastened upon her; for one day she lay in the dark back room, and then, feeling that she should go crazy there, she begged Mariuccia to make up a bed for her in the little work-room where at any rate the window admitted something to breathe. So Mariuccia settled her comfortably, closed the venetians and left her to herself, only looking in from time to time to bring her a sip of lemonade or turn her crumpled pillow. The summer fever was a familiar ill, and the old woman knew just what to do for it. It would pass — she had no anxiety on that score. Her whole mind was turned to something else, the discovery of some means by which to cure her padrone of the mad caprice which was destroying the peace of the household and would inevitably break up the household itself unless something were done to snap the spell.

For a spell it was, an "incanto," a cursed enchantment, cast by that stranger who had visited him some time ago but who now came no more. Yes, she had



been right in fastening the blame of it on him. Again she counted the days and weeks, with all the difficulty that besets the uneducated in any attempt at accuracy, and assured herself that she had not been mistaken. It was just two days after his first visit that the padrone had discovered that Giannella cooked polpetti so beautifully — that was the beginning of his symptoms. Yes, the strange lawyer had brought the trouble (managgia to him and the best of his little dead); he had woven the spell and, according to all the canons of black magic, he alone must remove it. The only other cure would be an exorcism in form, and Mariuccia doubted whether the master in his present naughty state of mind would admit the priest and acolyte into the house, much less stand still to be sprinkled with holy water and have the prayers said over him.

So the stranger must be found and coaxed or bribed or terrorized into undoing his work. Mariuccia had no personal fear of him and no doubts of her success, could she only lay her hand upon him. If Domine Dio would but keep His Hand on her head so that she should not choke with rage before she had said her say, that say would open the lawyer's eyes to the punishments awaiting the servants of the Fiend. Cipicchia! She would describe his future and that of all his descendants, as well as the present torture of his ancestors for his misdoing, in terms so scorching that the boldest miscreant's courage must give way under them. All the splendidly vivid descriptions of hell that she had listened to in church when some Passionist Father was invited to



preach repentance during Lent had been stored up in her memory, clear and sequent, as it is only possible for spoken words to be stored in minds which have always depended on oral instruction alone. Each grizzly, terrifying detail was as much a fact to Mariuccia as the visible surroundings of her daily life.

“Oh, give him to me, *Madonna mia bella*,” she prayed, “and I will teach him something for the good of his soul, besides obtaining the cure of my poor padroncino! Tell me a little — is it his fault? How should he, good pacific man, with his blind eyes that never seem to see anything but his books and his stones — how should he recognize the emissary of Satan, in that nice frock coat too, and with such pleasant manners? That young man would have deceived anybody except an angel or a saint. Now, if I find him, I will light a candle of three pounds’ weight — think of that, how grand it will look — over there at your altar in San Severino! I will indeed, if I have to go without food for a week to buy it.”

Having made this heroic promise, Mariuccia felt better. She would be shown the way — who ever appealed to the Mother of Mercy in vain? And as she went cheerily about the humble tasks which made the sum of her life, a light came to her. She and Giannella must have a man to help them, a man who could go about in the streets and public places and seek out their enemy for them, as they themselves could not possibly do. And the man was there. Who but that kind, clever Signorino Goffi, who spoke so amiably, so condescendingly, not only to Giannella — small



wonder in that, she was the prettiest bit of sugar in Rome—but to poor old Mariuccia Botti, who was little accustomed to courtesy and attention and had not made a new friend in twenty years.

Yes, she would tell him all about it, and he, so instructed, so intelligent, would certainly do what was required. Here was the answer to her prayer already. She would take the rest for granted and buy that candle to-morrow. The blessed Madonna would not let a poor old woman beat her in generosity — spend all that money in vain. That would hardly be delicate, and delicacy, the most exquisite consideration for the feelings of others, was, as Mariuccia knew, one of the Divine characteristics, and could always be counted upon, if poor mortals were only willing to do their part.



## CHAPTER XVI

**G**IANNELLA was not the only person who was suffering from the effects of the scirocco. Across the way good Fra Tommaso was weighed down by unaccustomed spiritual depression hitherto unknown to his cheerful nature. He did not ascribe it to the weather, but to the small progress he was making towards the saintliness which the Cardinal, thirty years before, had pointed out to him as his goal. Padre Anselmo had done the same every week since then; and Fra Tommaso confessed to himself, with many misgivings, that he was woefully far away from it still. Twice lately he had lost his temper with the schoolboy who served the first Mass; this morning he had been so carried away as to box the youngster's ears for trying to trip him up as he came out of the sacristy; also he had had more distractions than usual of late, and only last Saturday had made up his mind that he would break the bonds which held him to the world at one blow — and not look at a single face in the church. This had been hard work indeed, but he had succeeded in keeping his eyes on the ground as he went about his duties, and had not even looked up when somebody knocked over a chair. Still he was very unhappy, and when the midday gun boomed from Sant' Angelo found it hard to put much spirit into his bell-ringing. That blessed fellow over at Santa Eula-



lia would have it all his own way to-day, for Fra Tommaso's arms ached, and his peals trailed off into silence while all the other belfries were clanging with sound. As they ceased he heard his rival still ding-donging it across the river, and it was with a dreadful sense of deficiency and defeat that he closed the church and climbed the long flights to his loggia.

As he emerged from the semi-darkness of the stairs into the blaze of light and heat on the roof he sank down in the strip of shade by the doorstep of his room and leaned back, weary and breathless, against the lintel. How hot and sweet the "basilica" was smelling there in its box on the parapet, and how pleasantly the perfume mingled with that of the cabbage soup simmering confidentially on the charcoal inside the room! Ah, it was pleasant up here; the world and its temptations lay six flights below; no distractions could climb as high as this, thank Heaven.

His pigeons came fluttering down from the eaves to welcome him, and hopped about, anxiously waiting for their largesse of corn. He was about to rise and fetch it when he glanced up and saw that one of the number had not joined the rest, but perched on a flower-pot with averted head as if in a fit of bad temper. Fra Tommaso feared it must be ailing and, getting up stiffly, prepared to capture it. As he moved, the others gathered eagerly round his feet, their burnished plumage giving out splendid glints of purple and green in the sun. The old man bent down to them laughing. "Patience, patience, you gluttonous ones," he said, "you shall have it all in good time."



Then he rubbed his eyes and looked at them again. All the seven were there, yes, seven. He looked up at the parapet, and there, viciously pulling a grand red carnation to pieces, sat an eighth, an audacious stranger who evidently intended to make himself at home.

Out came Fra Tommaso's head from the strip of shade, the sun causing him to blink painfully and showing the deep lines on his dark old face and the greenish seams of his worn robe. With outstretched hand he cautiously approached his visitor; but the caution was thrown away, for the strange bird landed on his shoulder and began playfully pecking at his grizzled hair, murmuring soft little sounds as if to entreat his indulgence. It made no resistance when he lifted it off to see it closer, but as he did so, his fingers came in contact with metal, with ribbon — what was this? He almost let the creature go in his amazement, when he discovered that it wore a tiny silver collar and that a ribbon, slender as a thread, was attached to the collar and passed under one wing. With shaking hand he pulled at the silk, and then almost reeled in surprise, for out came a fold of paper with writing showing through its thin tissue. Holy Saints preserve us! What portent was this?

His first impulse was one of fear. He moved a step to hurl the uncanny creature over the parapet; then curiosity overpowered him. He must see what was written on the paper. He knew that he should have no more peace of mind unless he did. Clumsily he got the missive free and opened it with knotty fingers that



had never handled a love letter before. All was dim till he pulled out his horn spectacles and fixed them on his nose; then, careless of the sun that was beating on his bare head, deaf to the cries of his faithful retainers clamoring for food, he read this surprising message:

“Angel of my heart, for three days I have not seen thy beautiful face. I expire of anguish. I consume with torment. When shall I behold thee again? Ah, let it be soon, or I shall throw myself into the river. I cannot support existence parted from thee. Thine for all eternity. R.”

Now indeed Fra Tommaso's head reeled and he had to put out a hand to the parapet to keep himself from falling. He nearly knocked over the cherished lemon-tree, and as he bumped against it was aware of the unknown bird perched on a branch, gazing at him with a wicked, knowing gleam in its bright eyes. The sacristan recoiled in horror. What demon was this, assailing him in his old age with lures which he had bravely renounced in his distant youth? No other thought occurred to him than that he had been singled out for supernatural trial by the powers of darkness; as soon as he could collect his senses he breathed a fervent prayer to dear Saint Anthony of the many temptations to preserve him from yielding a hair's-breadth to their wiles.

This was instantly effectual, for the unblessed visitor suddenly spread its wings, rose up into the air and



fluttered away over the roof. Fra Tommaso breathed more easily for a moment; then he realized that he still retained the missive of evil in his hand. Ah, it must be destroyed at once. In his haste to reach the fire he stumbled over the uneven bricks, startling his own innocent pigeons so that they scurried away from under his feet. Once inside his room he almost ran to the square of bricks in the corner where the charcoal was burning in one opening, lifted off the earthenware pot with its cabbage soup bubbling so appetizingly, and dropped the communication of the Fiend among the coals. Then, as if fearing that it would fly out in his face, he replaced the pot firmly. He had conquered the first assault of the enemy at one blow, but he felt that he must be on the alert for the next attack.

Exhausted with so many emotions, he sat down, wiping his face, to collect his thoughts. What dreadful sin or weakness had he fallen into of late? What inner traitor had opened his heart's door to the adversary? Poor Fra Tommaso was conscious of having battled rather manfully against his besetting sin, his love of watching the congregation, of weaving his own little stories about the bright young faces and the tired old ones, his sympathy for the widow who always cried a little at Mass, and even for the pretty, naughty girl who had actually passed a note from her prayer-book into the hand of the young man who paused for a moment beside her chair. He had tried not to wonder what could be the matter over there with Giannella, that the blinds of her workroom window, whence she had often waved a smiling greeting



to her old friend the sacristan, should be tightly closed — and that neither she nor Mariuccia should have come to the church for some days. He was sure he had been faithful to last Saturday's resolve to keep his eyes on the ground as he came and went. Last Saturday, and this was Tuesday. Three days. The period mentioned in that wicked letter!

The terrible conviction was forced upon him that his tempter was some member of the congregation who had noticed his refusal to look around and, aided by the powers of darkness, was taking means to shake his resolution. "For three days I have not seen thy beautiful face." There was not a mirror in the whole of the San Severino establishment, and Fra Tommaso had not seen his own face for some thirty years. He put up his hand and felt it in a wondering way. It seemed very rough and stubbly; the pious barber who shaved him for nothing only called on Saturday evenings. Surely none but the Father of Lies could tell him that it was beautiful!

Well, that enemy could be subdued. He rose wearily; the first weapon to employ being self-denial, Fra Tommaso sternly removed his dinner from the fire and put it out of sight in the cupboard. Then, instead of taking his siesta, he went down and set about cleaning one or two corners of the church with such good will that his broom dislodged clouds of dust and sent them flying about him till the stray sunbeams caught them in the air and turned them into a hundred floating aureoles above his good gray



head. Perhaps they were reflections of some real and lovely halo stored up for the single of heart.

Twelve hours later Rome lay sleeping under the August moon, sleeping in a flood of silver that spread and broadened as the perfect orb swung slowly up till it marked its zenith in the faint yet living argent of the sky. The stars seemed to withdraw from its path, their delicate, infinite myriads weaving ethereal veils of moving silver arc above arc, in the measureless spaces beyond, like immortal spirits watching the progress of some incarnate loveliness through a world apart from theirs, a world holding it by an unseen yet inseverable tie to its splendid tangibilities of marble palaces and leaping fountains and deep old gardens full of oleander fragrances and cypress shades.

Rain had fallen in the hills, and with the full of the moon had come a cool breeze from the west; before it the miasmas of the scirocco broke up and fled. In the midnight silence the wind blew softly over the seven hills, singing little songs of health and freshness near at hand. On Fra Tommaso's loggia the carnations were reaching out to the coolness, the little lemon-tree was spreading each leaf like a shining spearhead in the calm, unscorching light; and between the carnations and the lemon-tree a young man stood bareheaded, leaning over the parapet and gazing with sorrowful eyes at a closed window in the palace wall across the way.



Rinaldo had passed the most wretched day of his life; every hour of it had been a drawn-out purgatory. This was the third of his trial, for he had had no news of Giannella since the Saturday morning when Sora Amalia had told him that she was ill. What was happening behind those impenetrable walls? Was his beloved suffering, dying perhaps, longing for a word from him, and wondering that she received none, that he did not come to her? How could he? Twice each day he had rung at the green door in the hope of learning something; and each time the little shutter behind the grating had been withdrawn, two fierce spectacled eyes had identified him from between the bars — and then the shutter was pushed sharply into place and the guardian of the house had retreated and closed another door within. The Professor had evidently forbidden Mariuccia to answer the bell, and Rinaldo could think of no means of communicating with her. As a forlorn hope he had despatched Themistocles with an impassioned letter, and Themistocles, evil fowl, had stayed away many hours, got rid of his message — and returned with no answer. Giannella must be ill indeed if she could not send him one little word to show that she was alive, was thinking of her faithful Rinaldo. Perhaps, he told himself, his sudden declaration of love, the adorable thing unnamed till now, had frightened or offended her. But in that case surely she would have sent it back. No, he was sure that she had received it, and almost sure that she was even now holding it in her fast-chilling hand or pres-



sing it feebly to her dying lips! Death is forever on duty in the antechamber of youth's picturesque imagination; the slightest accent of sorrow calls him up, and he seems to put his head in at the door and say, "Here I am, my dear. Use me as you like. Is it for yourself? Then it shall be all flowers and elegies and lovely memories for your mourning friends. Oh, it is for your best beloved? I see. I can manage that too, and leave you a hero and a martyr, bravely carrying a broken heart to an early grave at your lost one's side."

And youth bows its head and weeps in ecstatic pain on the henchman's indulgent shoulder, and then says, "Another time, good friend," and then flies back, a thousand times deeper in love with living, to kind, familiar life, strengthened and sane once more.

Rinaldo's heart had been drawing him all day to the point when he could at least feel near to Giannella, Fra Tommaso's loggia. In the cool midnight, when he could count on the owner's heaviest sleep, he stole thither and stood with outstretched hands, praying to the closed window that barred in his dream of happiness. The breeze played comfortably on his brow, the bath of moonlight calmed his fretted nerves; he hardly knew whether the moister in his eyes were tears or the dewy benedictions of the night. "Giannella, Giannella, flower of my soul," he murmured, "speak to me, dream of me. I am here, my heart calls you — come, come."

There was a sound across the way, the click of a receding bolt, the stealthy scraping of wood on stone.



Then a shutter swung open, and out of the dark rough frame, like a flower breaking in snow from its rejected sheath, Giannella leaned out, a vision of whiteness mantled in falling gold, and raised her lovely face to the sky.

A cry broke from her lover's lips and startled her. She shook back her hair and straightened herself, resting both hands on the sill as her gaze explored the night, traveling slowly up to the higher level opposite. Then a cry of terrified joy rang out in the stillness, for she thought she saw a spirit — Rinaldo's.

The next moment she knew it was her lover, in the flesh, though how he came to be standing there seemed a secret between him and some kind archangel — for a word came to her across the dividing depth, a word so pulsing with passion that only living lips could have given it utterance, "Amore mio, amore mio!"

Rinaldo's hands were stretched out as if he would lift her over the abyss to his side. They two were alone in the world of the night; above them hung the gentle moon in calm, encouraging splendor; all barriers save that of the narrow empty space were left far below, and what was space to them? Each could hear the other's voice, see the other's eyes, and there was none between them. What more could the delicate young love desire as yet?

"Rinaldo, is it you?" came the tremulous, happy tones. "O my soul, I die of joy. It seemed as if I should never see you again."



“I have died a thousand deaths, Giannella,” he answered. “They told me you were ill—I could not get to you. O Heaven give me wings. Call, call, my heart’s love, and your sister angels will bring you over to me.”

“To ‘clausura?’” she replied. “Figlio mio, you stand on such holy ground that its guardians would chase the angels away, if they were sisters of mine. How did you get there? Is it safe for you? Oh, take care. If anything should happen to you—” She leaned further out and he could see all the tender anxiety in her eyes.

“How I came?” he repeated. “Cuore mio, I have been here so often watching for you as you came and went past that window—my feet would find the way in the dark, I think.”

“But it is Fra Tommaso’s loggia,” she persisted. “I am afraid for you! The Fathers will be so angry if they find you there. They might send you to prison, and I should die of grief. Oh, go back now. I am frightened. Where is Fra Tommaso?”

“Sound asleep, in there,” Rinaldo replied, laughing and pointing over his shoulder to the tightly closed door of the one room. “Have no fears, he is snoring sublimely. Do you think such a night as this was made for snuffy old sacristans? No, indeed. All the lovers in paradise are on our side, keeping him quiet so that we may speak at last. Tell me, my beautiful angel, do you love me?”

The beautiful angel did not answer in words, but held out her arms with a gesture of such true ten-



derness that Rinaldo's heart seemed to leap across the gulf and nestle in them.

"I knew it," came his enraptured cry. "You are for me, core of my heart. Oh, but we shall be happy, happy."

"Ah, Rinaldo," she replied, her face changing, "there are too many obstacles — you do not know — they are trying to make me marry the Professor."

"They? Who?" he asked fiercely. "Tell me their names — then leave them to me."

"It is he, Bianchi, and the Princess. She said it was my duty. But it is not." She straightened up with sudden energy. "I know now, thank God, I know. But there is much trouble, Mariuccia wants to tell you about it, to ask you to help us. You will see — you are so clever — you will understand what should be done."

"Why do anything, my dear, except walk over to San Severino with Mariuccia and ask one of the Fathers to marry us? The home is ready, I hunger for you. Leave everything behind and come."

"No," she replied gravely, "that is not the way. We must leave no bad feeling behind to make other people miserable. He is the padrone, he has let me live here for years — he has never been unkind — till lately, and Mariuccia thinks some evil person has cast a spell over him. We must make him see reason, and the Princess must understand too. She was very good to me once. It would seem a piece of treason to just run away like that — it would not bring us happiness, Rinaldo mio."



You shall have it your own way, bene mio," he said, "but promise me one thing. When we have done all we can to make them understand, when it is explained to them that we love each other, that I am a galantuómo, that I give you what they have never given you, a happy home, such as the best, sweetest girl in the world should have — the appartamento is of a prettiness — and so cheap — then, if they still oppose us, you will say, 'Arrivederci, signori miei. It is now finished. I take the liberty of sending you some confetti, for I espouse Rinaldo Goffi without another moment's delay.' Will you promise me that, Giannella?"

"Oh yes," she laughed back, "if Signor Goffi still wants me. Does he know that I have no dowry, no family, no pretty clothes to wear when he takes me out for a walk — that I am nearly twenty-one, and as stupid as a cabbage? Has he considered all these tribulations?"

"If you say another word I shall jump across the street into your room," he declared; "love will carry me over quite safely. And how Mariuccia will scold when she finds me there."

"Audacious one, you grow indiscreet," said Giannella. "To-morrow morning Mariuccia will look for you after the first Mass. Oh, I am so much better. I shall not be ill any more. You have cured me, dear, enlightened doctor. So to-morrow be sure to come to the church in time. I shall not be there, she will not let me go out so soon, but she will tell you everything. Now go, go, beloved, we have talked too



long. Even the moon is getting tired of listening to us, see, she veils her face. Good-night, good-night!"

A little cloud had drifted up from the west, shadowing the silvery air to gray, but Rinaldo saw Giannella lean forward and blow him a kiss. Then she resolutely drew the blind into place; he heard the bolt click, and turned to depart. Only just in time, for he became aware that Fra Tommaso was moving in his room. The next instant Rinaldo was over the dividing wall and racing for his own terrace through the ups and downs of the little city on the roof. Then the sacristan's door opened with a rusty creak and the old man, still dazed with sleep, came out and looked about him. The paleness of dawn was in the east, his pigeons stirred and scratched in their cote, and he went and drove them in again with sharp taps.

"Unmannerly fowls that you are," he grumbled, "what have you been making such a disturbance about? I could have sworn someone was talking here. Silly ones, it is only three o'clock. We can all go back to bed for an hour."



## CHAPTER XVII

**M**ARIUCCIA, having decided on her course of action, had confided to Giannella her intention of appealing to Signorino Goffi. She would look for him in church in the morning, and if he was not there, she would find him out at the top of Sora Amalia's house. Did not Giannella think that a fine idea? The padrone had managed to enlist the most excellent Princess on his side (Mariuccia had by this time concluded that the Princess's verdict was given upon insufficient information, and might be combated without impiety); well, she and Giannella would also find a defender, and he at any rate should labor under no misapprehension as to the true state of affairs. Then, closing the window so as to admit no breath of the night air, which the Romans look upon as fatal, she set all the doors open and retired to her cave beyond the kitchen on the other side of the passage.

Giannella had waited until the sound of her deep breathing came regularly through the darkness. Then, panting for air, she had gently closed her door and opened her window. Better malaria than asphyxia, she thought.

When she crept back to bed after her talk with Rinaldo it seemed as if the little room was full of



light and sweet music. Oh, God was good, life was divine. No one in the world had ever been so happy as she! Long she lay awake, going over every word her lover had spoken, remembering every glance of his eyes, every expression of his face which told her that he was all hers, forever and ever. When at last she fell asleep, the chill airs of dawn were wandering through the blind, and its first light showed her resting as peacefully as a child, heartache and fever gone together, the round cheeks smooth as rose leaves, the baby gold of the hair flung wide over the pillow and half veiling the young white hands that lay crossed on her breast.

So Mariuccia found her when she stole in before going out to the church, and an exultant pride in her Giannella's loveliness rose in her heart and brought a little moisture to her faithful old eyes. "Madonna mia," she whispered, "were you more beautiful when Monsignore Gabriele came and knelt before you and said, 'Ave gratia plena?' Oh, you must indeed have had her poor mother under your mantle when she bore this flower! Poverina, she never lived to rejoice over her, but that was just as well, since she would not have known how to bring her up. But there are heretics and heretics, eh, Madonne mia bella? And that poor little thing knew no better, did she? She kissed your picture and the crucifix when I held them to her lips, and she died for her baby — and as for Signor Brockmann, good man, he never refused a paoletto to the Cappuccino when he came to beg — and this angel has prayed for her parents' souls ever



since she could speak — oh, they may say what they like, Mother of Mercy, but you will see to it that she finds her poor papa and mamma in paradise. I am quite sure of that.”

Softly she went out locked the door and took away the key, for was not the unfortunate padrone, possessed of demons and no longer responsible for his actions, sleeping at the other end of the house? She crossed herself as she passed his door, and then, catching up her big umbrella, for the morning was cloudy, she hurried off to San Severino, where Fra Tommaso was ringing with a will for the first Mass.

Rinaldo descended a few minutes later and hastened to the side chapel, where he found Mariuccia already ensconced in her accustomed place. She was saying her rosary with great fervor. Once she turned to the young man with a look of tremendous meaning, and as soon as the last Gospel was ended rose from her knees and strode towards the door. Rinaldo followed and found her waiting for him in the outer court where he and Giannella had learned to know one another. The fountain was splashing rather sadly under a threatening sky; a drop or two of rain fell, blotching the flags; the beggars looked singularly depressed, and altogether the air was somewhat tragedy laden.

“Where can we speak as two alone?” the old woman asked wheeling round and facing the artist. Her black eyes were snapping under the colored handkerchief she had thrown over her head on entering the church, and her iron-gray hair was crinkling more



fiercely than usual round her low, dark forehead. She was evidently in fighting mood and Rinaldo hailed the symptoms joyfully. Between them they would make an end of all this rubbish about impossible marriages and imaginary obligations. He could have fought the world single-handed this morning.

At Mariuccia's question he glanced up sideways at the distant balustrade of his terrace, the spot whence he had first caught sight of Giannella. "Well, Sora Mariuccia," he said, "if you will be so complaisant as to climb ninety-three steps, we can discourse with much tranquillity in my studio up there. We shall have the place all to ourselves, at least."

"If steps were destined to kill me I should be in San Lorenzo now," she replied, shrugging her shoulders. "Let us go up."

He led the way past the dairy to the side door and his companion followed him up to the top landing without once pausing to take breath. He flung the door open and stood aside to let her pass in, and she was advancing when she suddenly backed against him with a scream of terror. "Madonne mia Santissima, what is *that*?"

Rinaldo, supporting her in his arms, looked over her shoulder and broke into uncontrollable laughter. His trusty lay figure was stretched on the floor in horrid disarray, one stiff, discolored arm raised as if protesting against the ravages of Themistocles, who sat on its head, tearing viciously at its matted



locks. Nothing so corpse-like and ghastly had ever saluted Mariuccia's vision, and she was trying hard not to faint. Suddenly Themistocles flew up with a moth-eaten ringlet in his beak. This was the last stroke. Mariuccia covered her face with her hands and rushed back, moaning, to the head of the stairs. Rinaldo was beside her in a moment, entreating, reassuring, laughing.

"Don't be alarmed," he pleaded, "it is only my mannechino, my model — what I paint from, you know. I should have warned you. Donkey without heart that I am, to give you such a fright! Come, I will show you." He drew her back into the room. "I was in a hurry to get down to the church this morning and knocked the old cripple over and never stopped to pick it up."

She turned her eyes unwillingly on the gruesome object while he bestowed it safely against the wall. Then she found courage to laugh at herself a little and sank, rather exhausted, into the chair of state, which Rinaldo pulled forward for her. She made a strange picture there, a homely sybil in peasant dress, with the strings of red coral round her neck and the gold earrings in her ears. Her brow was knitted with thought, her wrinkled hands grasped the two arms firmly; and behind her, on either side of her majestic old head, the bloated gilt cherubs dimpled and simpered as they had dimpled and simpered for powdered beauties and courtly prelates in days gone by.

Rinaldo, perched on a stool opposite, took in the



quaint picture and made a mental note of it for future reference. Now he was in a hurry to get to the business which had brought her there — without letting her perceive that he knew something of it already.

“I am so glad you wish to speak to me,” he began. “It is a pleasure to see you here. Is there anything I can do to serve you, my dear Sora Mariuccia?”

“Yes, there is, since you are so kind,” she replied; “a very important matter, a thing that is giving us much disquiet, Giannella and me. Indeed, to tell you a secret, signorino, it has really made Giannella ill.”

“Is she not better this morning?” he asked unguardedly and with a mysterious smile.

“How did you know she was ill?” Mariuccia’s question was sharply put.

He hastened to retrieve his mistake. “Oh, Sora Amalia told me, and I was deeply grieved to hear it. I have been praying for her recovery.”

“You are a good boy,” said Mariuccia, approvingly, “and your prayers have been answered, for she is certainly better this morning. She was sleeping like an image when I came out. But when she begins to go about the house again, the Signor Professore (who is the best of men you understand, only a little irritable just now) will begin to make trouble — but trouble! Oh, Signorino Rinaldo, there seems no end to it, and what can I do? You will help us, will you not?”

“Only command me, command me,” he cried, clasping his hands imploringly. “I would die to serve her — and you,” he added hastily.



Mariuccia looked round, then leaned forward and spoke in a stage whisper. "The padrone wants to marry her — in two weeks — and it is I, who have lived with him for twenty years, who tell you this — if he wants to, he will. When the devil gets into him — God forgive me for speaking so of my own master — he is as obstinate as a mule, and, in one manner or another, is sure to get his way. Giannella is a good obedient child, and he persuaded the most excellent Princess to tell her that it was her duty to consent. But if the Princess, who is a most noble Christian, had known half what I know, she would let herself be eaten by wolves before she tried to give him the girl. For he will starve her to death — he cannot help it, that is the way the good God made him, poor man — I know what I am talking about. Oh, what is the matter? Madonna mia, are you going to have a fit?"

For Rinaldo's face had turned alarmingly red, his eyes were half closed and the veins stood out swollen and purple on his temples, which he was hammering with his clenched fists. Mariuccia ran to him and pulled his hands down from his head and shook him violently. Then he seemed to come to himself. The flush ebbed from his face, leaving him of a ghastly paleness, his arms fell at his sides, and he sank, limp and exhausted, into the chair she had just quitted. She hastened to bring him a drink of water, and when he had swallowed it he looked up gratefully saying, "Thank you, I am better now ——" He seemed to speak with difficulty.



"Pray excuse me. I was overcome for a moment. You were telling me — oh, the words will choke me — that Bianchi — is persecuting Giannella — that assassin, that executioner — he —"

"Stop," cried Mariuccia; "you shall not speak of the padrone like that. He is a good man. It is not his fault. You will understand when I tell you how it all happened. Three months ago —"

"Three months," Rinaldo exclaimed; "but why did you not tell me? Do you not know that I adore Giannella? that I do not see the hour to marry her myself?"

"Traitor," thundered the old woman, "have you been daring to make love to her in secret? You whom I took for a galantuómo, a man of honor — a good Christian? Imbecile, donkey that I have been to trust you!"

Her outbreak of righteous wrath was terrifying, and Rinaldo, who, when not angry, was quite a gentle and unwarlike person, quailed under it for a moment, and was half inclined to believe that he had behaved very badly. But only for a moment. He remembered that there had never been the slightest intention of deceiving Mariuccia or anybody else; that it was only because she had stayed at home during the Professor's illness that he had not spoken to her before. How he and Giannella had come to understand each other was their own affair; he would submit to no catechism on that point.

Mariuccia was opening her mouth to speak again, but he held up his hand for silence, and, coming close



to her, looked her squarely in the eyes. "Sora Mariuccia," he said, "your first opinion of me is the right one. I am an honest man and, I hope, a good Christian. I love your Giannella so truly that since I first saw her I have had one thought only, to make her my wife. I have never spoken one word to her which I could not have spoken in church at the foot of the altar with all the saints in paradise listening to me. I was only waiting for an opportunity of opening my heart to you. I consume with love for her — and I know that she loves me. I am not rich, but I can maintain her in all comfort and decorum — though not as she deserves. Would anything in the world be too good for her? No, but I will make her the happiest woman in Rome. I promise you that. And you, dear, kind Sora Mariuccia, you will leave that cataplasm of a Professor and come and live with us, will you not?"

He took both her hands in his, and there was great earnestness in his bright eyes. He looked so true and gentle and handsome that Mariuccia's heart became as melting wax. She threw her arms round his neck and kissed him on both cheeks; then she stood back and looked at him again, laughing and crying at once.

"Figlio mio bello, I see, I understand. You have a heart of gold. Forgive me for that outburst. What would you have? I was frightened for a moment. You see I have kept Giannella like the Bambino Gesù down there in the church, under glass. Till this year she never went out alone except for



the few yards from our door to San Severino and for the marketing close by. She has never spoken to a stranger — except you — she is a flower of candor, her soul is as pure as the wax on the altar. What would you have? The world is bad and I am only a stupid old woman, and I was frightened. But now let us discourse reasonably.”

She sat down again and Rinaldo drew his stool close to the big chair and prepared to listen. She laid a hand on his knee and went on very seriously. “If you want to marry Giannella, you must persuade two persons, my padrone — oh, do hear me patiently!” for Rinaldo seemed on the point of interrupting her — “yes, my padrone, and the most excellent Princess ——”

“But what has that old lady got to do with it?” he asked, frowning.

“A great deal,” was the reply. “She gave Giannella nine years’ splendid education, she is her god-mother of First Communion — and she is my principessa. Do you think I am one of the profane, to go against one of the family like that? No indeed. Why, none of my relations would ever speak to me again. It would be a great sin. And the padrone told her what he wanted and persuaded her that it was right. And she sent for us and gave us both such a talking to that for a little while we almost thought she was right too. What would you have? A great person like that, so pious, with so much learning and cleverness! Of course Giannella had not a word to say, and as for me, I did not dare to



open my mouth. And that was a big mistake. For afterwards I perceived that the Principessa could not understand what she did not know, and that I ought to have told her something — that this caprice, this extravagance of my poor master has come suddenly upon him, that it is against his nature and clearly of the devil.”

“You really talk very strangely, Sora Mariuccia,” said Rinaldo. “Do you not think that any man who knew Giannella would wish to marry her if he could — even as I hope to do?”

“I never expected you to take the padrone’s part,” she retorted laughing. Then she went on more seriously. “But listen to me, signorino. To me you appear a good boy, honest and kind and truly simpatico, but that is not enough. You will not get my consent until you have satisfied the parroco that you are fit to be Giannella’s husband. He will want to see your baptismal certificate, and your ticket of this year’s Easter Communion, and also the police report of your conduct generally. If he is satisfied, we will order the confetti, my son, but I say nothing till then.”

“He will be satisfied,” Rinaldo assured her, more thankful than he had ever expected to be that his record would bear scrutiny; “but tell me, I must know, how far does the Professor’s real power over Giannella extend? Is he her legal guardian? That would give us trouble.”

“Legal guardian indeed!” snorted Mariuccia. “Only girls with dowries require those. Not a poor



child who would have been taken to the Pietá if I had had the heart to let her go there! Why, the padrone was always telling me that that was the place for her. He grumbled at me for bringing her into the house. He never took any notice of her till three months ago — and then, from one day to another — he is crazy to marry her. I astrologized my head for weeks to find out what had changed him all in a moment like that. Then I perceived,” she leaned closer and spoke in a whisper, “that an evil enchantment was laid upon him.”

“Really? And by whom?” Rinaldo asked dubiously.

Then Mariuccia related the story of the strange lawyer’s visit, of how Giannella had been called in and interrogated, and of how the master looked better pleased than she had ever seen him before. “And,” she wound up triumphantly, “that very evening — no, the next — he finds out that Giannella cooks polpetti divinely; then he wants her to take care of his books. The lawyer comes again — an apoplexy to him — and the next thing we know is that Giannella is good, that she is pretty — that Heaven destines the padrone to be her husband. How does it appear to you, signorino? To me it is magic of the most wicked.”

Rinaldo was walking up and down the studio in great excitement. “Magic?” he cried; “no, Sora Mariuccia, I see worse than that. We have here a great mystery. I fear some of her parents’ relations have heard how good and beautiful Giannella is, and



are trying to take her away from Rome. Naturally the Professor — who must have eyes and a heart somewhere, poveraccio — does not wish to lose her — I told you no man could help loving her — and has thought of this as the only way to keep her here. But we must know, we must know. You are right. I must find that lawyer. He will tell us what it all means. Oh, for Heaven's sake, try to remember his name."

"I never heard it," she said; "he gave Giannella a card and she did not read it, and when we looked for it later it was gone. We only know he was a lawyer because the padrone called him 'Signor Avvocato' while Giannella was in the room."

"We must get hold of that card," Rinaldo declared. "When you go home tell Giannella to look for it everywhere — she will find it, I am sure. And I will come to the entrance of the palazzo this evening at Ave Maria, and you will be so good as to come down and give it to me. After that, leave it to me — I make it my affair. I would spare you the stairs and come up, dear Sora Mariuccia, but the Professor might see me, and he must suspect nothing as yet. Oh, tell Giannella —"

But Mariuccia did not wait to hear the love messages. Fra Tommaso's bells were pealing the hour, eight o'clock, and the padrone would expect his coffee in precisely fifteen minutes. She sped downstairs at a wonderful pace, opened her huge umbrella on the doorstep, which was wet with rain, and nearly knocked down Sora Amalia, who was in her doorway ex-



changing the day's news with Sora Rosa opposite. They both looked after the retreating figure and nodded to one another sagely.

"I told you so," cried the lady of the dairy triumphantly. "You see! they make the arrangements."

"La Biondina will at least have the salad at her door," replied Sora Rosa, "and that is a fine thing. But she will never have tomatoes at three baiocchi a pound after she marries that rich Signorino Goffi! Trust me!"



## CHAPTER XVIII

**A**S the quick southern dusk was falling Rinaldo stole to the foot of the "Scala III.," concealed himself behind an open stable door, and waited for Mariuccia. Like all his countrymen, he loved mystery. This innocent conspiracy set his pulses throbbing pleasantly and cleared his brain to crystal acuteness. Besides, he had made an ally of Mariuccia, he had opened his heart to her, and, after her first explosion of suspicion, had been received as a prospective son. The victory over the Professor and his mighty endorser, the Princess, would be mere child's play now, if only Giannella held firm. Although he had the happiness of knowing that she loved him, the young man did not deceive himself into believing that she would hold out forever under such pressure as was being brought to bear on her. The little that he knew of young girls had taught him otherwise; the better the girl, the more attention she would pay to the commands of those whom she considered in authority over her. He could not imagine that his own sisters would not meekly accept the spouses selected for them. Giannella was singularly docile and humble-minded. She had always been accustomed to set her own wishes aside where those of others were in opposition to them, and in his few talks with her he had seen that the Professor's



awesome learning and the Princess's power, rank, and goodness, caused the girl to regard those two as more or less anointed arbiters of her destiny. Rinaldo himself had plenty of proper respect for his betters, and was a most loyal son of Church and State (one in those palmy days), but he came of a good old provincial stock, quite as proud in its way as any Cestaldini or Santafede; and moreover his university training and his artistic education had brought him in contact with highly educated and broadminded men, so that his outlook on life was a good deal more modern than Giannella's. She had not realized that she was being cruelly imposed upon, that no past benefits could confer on their donors the right to dispose of her entire future against her own inclinations. If she could be brought to understand that, Rinaldo felt that he would be the master of the situation; but there was no time to lose if Bianchi had really made up his mind to marry her at once.

The young man was revolving these thoughts in his dark corner when the grotesquely stealthy tread of creaking shoes drew him from his hiding-place to find Mariuccia peering round the side of the archway leading to the stairs. With a dramatic gesture she beckoned to him, laid a finger on her lips, and pushed a bit of pasteboard into his hands.

"Giannella found it between two of his books," she whispered. "Heaven send he does not look for it to-morrow."

"How is she this evening?" he inquired in the same tone.



“Only so-so,” was the reply; “the Signora Principessa has actually written her a letter — such an honor. But I almost wish she had not.”

“Written to Giannella!” he exclaimed. “What had she got to say?”

“Oh, all that she said the other day and more still. She is very sure that Giannella ought to accept. And the poor child, who had been so happy because I told her what we were talking about this morning, has been crying all day. She says that if it is her duty to marry the padrone she will try to fulfill it, but that she will want to throw herself into the Tiber afterwards. It is dreadful. If you can only find this avvocato and get him to make the padrone change his mind, well and good. But otherwise I see no way —”

“I do,” said Rinaldo sharply. “Giannella should have more sense. There are wise men, good priests, who will tell her in four words where her duty leads her. But we will try and reconcile everybody first, since you and she wish it. Wait a minute, I will take this man’s name and address and then you can put this card back where Giannella found it. Please hold this match for me.”

“Oh, make haste. Take care!” she exclaimed as Rinaldo struck a vesta and put it into her fingers. “He may come down. If he sees us talking together there will be more trouble.”

Rinaldo had copied the card while she was speaking. Now he returned it to her, saying, as the match spluttered out, “If he does come, I will speak to him,



I promise you. I will tell the old meddler to go and get himself fried — and all his best little dead too.”

Mariuccia shuddered at the suggestion of this deadliest insult in the Roman’s armory. “For the love of charity,” she implored, “do nothing so rash. He might hand you over to the police — or even cast the evil eye upon you. I cannot say that anything has ever happened to me — but he does squint dreadfully sometimes, poverino. Run, I hear someone coming.”

“As you will, I shall bring you good news to-morrow, I hope.” And he moved away and was lost in the darkness. Mariuccia drew back into the shadow of the stable and from thence watched Bianchi emerge from the archway. He was enveloped in the double-caped cloak which all the men carried with them after sundown, and held a sheaf of papers in one hand. He stumbled over a stone and the papers flew in every direction. Patiently he stooped and began to gather them up. The instinct of service was too strong for his old domestic. Instantly she was at his side, assisting him deftly.

“Is that you, Mariuccia?” he asked, peering round at her. “Where did you come from? I thought I had left you in the house.”

“You think and you think, and you never see anything, Sor Professore,” she grumbled. “I came down the stairs behind you. I must get some camomile for Giannella. She has a fever — of those!”

He seemed in a kindlier mood than usual, for he shook his head quite sympathetically and said, “That



is bad. I am sorry. But it is the weather, and all that heating food. I warned you before. The young blood is not like ours, my good Mariuccia. It makes itself to fire when the sun is in Leo. Give her less to eat and keep her quiet and she will be well in a few days." And he moved away, looking very like a brigand in his big cloak with one end thrown over his shoulder.

Mariuccia watched him disappear, with an expression of almost omniscient pity. "Sor Carlo mio," she murmured, "you have all the instructions of the holy Aristotle, and you can pull down Latin as I used to pull down the chestnuts at Castel Gandolfo — but you are just a baby in arms when it comes to serious things like food and drink. If I were not with you, you would be dead in a month. Rinaldo thinks he and Giannella will get me to live with them. Not a bit of it. They can take care of each other, the Madonna assisting them, and I will continue to protect this unfortunate man of learning till one of us is taken to San Lorenzo."

The evening was still young and Rinaldo thought he would go and listen to the music in Piazza Colonna for a little, so he made his way thither, guided by the strains of "Semiramide" which were ringing out over the otherwise silent city. Piazza Colonna was the favorite gathering place at this hour for citizens of the better class who were not able to get away to the country; as he turned into the square he saw it was already crowded with groups sitting before the cafés as well as with an ever-moving stream of pedestrians



taking leisurely exercise in the open space round the bandstand. He found a seat by one of the little marble-topped tables, ordered the popular "orzata," a milky-looking beverage of almond syrup and iced barley water, and, drawing out his notebook, read over the indications he had copied into it. The name Guglielmo De Sanctis, was a common though quite respectable one; there must be at least a hundred De Sanctises in and around Rome; but the address, a second floor in a fashionable street, denoted that the gentleman in question was doing finely in his business, a fact which, Rinaldo thought, argued well for his character. He decided to call upon him the next morning, and then fell to considering how best to put his rather difficult case.

While the active part of his consciousness was thus employed, the other, the artistic one, was enjoying the charming scene before him. The great square, fronting on the Corso and sloping gently up to the majestic façade of the General Post Office at the farther end, lay under the dark night sky, fringed by a many-ringed circle of lights twinkling and intermingling in a soft golden glow. From the center the sculptured shaft of Marcus Aurelius' triumphal column shot up till its crown was lost in darkness; the fountains near it poured their cool sheets of water, gemmed with borrowed stars, into the marble basins, with a rhythmical splash that made a pleasant under-theme to the full music of the band; and every pause in the music was filled with talk and laughter from the audience, delighted with the unexpected coolness after a stifling day. The women looked charmingly pretty in their



embroidered muslins and pale summer silks, and these were diversified by the rather theatrical uniforms of the French officers who, conscious of their exalted mission of protecting the Holy Father, swaggered happily about the city in those days, loving and beloved and blissfully unwitting of history to be.

The humming stream of humanity passed and re-passed before Rinaldo's eyes, momentarily eclipsing the pearl and silver of the fountains and then parting to let it shine forth again. Overhead the sky was a dome of shadows; neither moon nor star shot a ray through the darkness which, with the sudden cooling of the air, presaged some portentous change of weather. Rinaldo was taking in all the attractions of the scene, but such spectacles meant to him very much what they do to the rest of his countrymen — pleasant accessories of existence, but too familiar to merit any special attention, except from luckless foreigners who, of course, coming from sad lands where the sun never shone, where the grapes did not grow, where there were no pretty women to admire, no saints to invoke and no feastdays to enjoy, naturally went mad with delight on finding themselves in a country provided with these necessities of life, and talked a lot of nonsense about Italy and the Italians, unconscious that the latter epithet is one which every Roman indignantly rejects. "Italy" ceases with the frontiers of Tuscany, which have the honor of bordering on the papal states themselves, the setting of the city which is the jewel of the world. To the south, below her feet, as it were, comes the "Regno," the kingdom of



the two Sicilies, in due subordination. All is — or rather was in Rinaldo's day — as it should be, and as it undoubtedly would be for ever and ever. All this the benighted foreigner could not be expected to understand, and he was forgiven his ignorance in consideration of the welcome addition to public and private revenues furnished by his lavish expenditure. Rinaldo Goffi in particular had much reason to bless him as an easily satisfied patron of the arts, for most of his pretty genre pictures, not very original but pleasantly delicate in color and correct in drawing, found their way to other lands. He had just put the last touches to the venerable prelate who was going to supply him and Giannella with furniture, and was calculating how soon it would be safe to have him packed for shipment.

“Day after to-morrow, perhaps, if it does not rain,” he was thinking, when a young man detached himself from the crowd and bore down upon him with the alertness of a dog recognizing its master. It was little Peppino Sacchetti, who, with his bright eyes, dark complexion and quick movements, always suggested the appearance of a black-and-tan terrier in gay tail-wagging mood.

“How goes it, Nalduccio?” he inquired as he dragged a chair close to that of his friend. “I was looking for you, my son. I have not seen you for days. Have you been finishing his Eminence — or preparing a cup of coffee <sup>1</sup> for the old gentleman who gave you such a turn that Friday?”

<sup>1</sup> Synonym for poison.



"Both, Peppino," Rinaldo replied, "but the coffee is only a mora dose, and the most saintly of cardinals would endorse the prescription."

"You will have to put it by to cool, then," Peppino declared; "we are all going to be wanted very shortly. The river is out on the Prati,<sup>1</sup> and if I am not mistaken, Ripetta will be a canal before the end of the week."

"But it has hardly rained yet," Rinaldo objected, looking up at the sky; "and I was hoping it would hold off for a day or two longer to let my picture dry."

"You should have spoken to Santa Ribiana<sup>2</sup> about it," said Peppino. "It seems to be all arranged now. The Senate sent us word to hold ourselves and our boats in readiness for a call at any moment. It has been raining in the hills, and Tiber and Anio are both over their banks for miles. They may flood the campagna to Ostia if they like — one is so thankful for this coolness."

"There won't be much coolness for us if the boats are called out," Rinaldo remarked with a wry face. "Do you remember the last flood? We worked for twenty-four hours on end. I began to have some sympathy for the poor devils of convicts at the galleys."

Peppino laughed at his friend's dismay. "It all amuses me," he said; "one saw such funny sights. I shall never forget that poor priest floating down the Corso to his church with his feet in buckets. Do

<sup>1</sup> Low-lying meadows near the Vatican.

<sup>2</sup> Patron saint of rain.



you remember how well he balanced himself with his umbrella? And the old woman who called to us from a window to take her daughter-in-law away and drown her? They had been quarrelling like two furies, and the daughter-in-law came behind her and tried to pitch her out! How we laughed!”

Rinaldo smiled at the recollection; then he rose to go. “There is one thing I must do to-morrow morning,” he said, “whatever happens; so I shall not be available for any boat work before midday. I think you are mistaken, Peppino. It is not going to rain here to-night, and I do not believe there will be much of a flood unless it does. In any case, of course I shall be ready to do my share, but please manage not to have me sent for before noon.”

“What is this tremendously important business?” Peppino asked. “Perhaps I could help you with it.” But Rinaldo slipped off into the crowd. The only way to keep a secret from Peppino was to run away from him. He had no reticences about his own affairs and possessed a marvelously successful curiosity concerning those of others.

The next morning fulfilled his prophecy and broke in sheets of rain. Rinaldo, however, set out manfully and arrived at Signor De Sanctis’s door precisely at ten o’clock. He sent in his card — a thing of beauty penned with many flourishes by his own hand — requesting the favor of an interview on a matter of urgent importance. The lawyer received him coolly enough, for Rinaldo in his second best clothes and soaked boots did not look like a money-bringing client.



The coolness froze to hostility when the young man, in all good faith, disclosed the object of his visit. Would Signor De Sanctis tell him anything of the business which had brought him to call on Professor Bianchi, and in what way was the Signorina Brockmann connected with it?

De Sanctis leaned back in his chair and eyed Rinaldo with scorn. Did Signor — he glanced contemptuously at the card on the table — ah, Goffi, Signor Goffi, imagine that the affairs of clients were to be revealed to unknown inquirers? Who did the visitor take him for that he should venture to insult him with such a request?

Rinaldo saw that he had begun at the wrong end of the skein. He hastened to assure the incensed gentleman that nothing was further from his thoughts than such transgression; that the delicacy and honor of the distinguished avvocato De Sanctis were so well known that only to him, of all the legal lights in Rome, would it be possible to confide what he was about to relate; and he added that he was equally sure that no one else could explain the extraordinary and mysterious change which had come over Bianchi and which was afflicting his family and friends so deeply.

De Sanctis began to look interested; his suspicion that Rinaldo was illicitly trying to ascertain the figure of the young lady's dowry was allayed by the importance given to the Professor.

“But what is this afflicting change?” he asked. “Signor Bianchi has the reputation of being a man of fixed habits and entire absorption in his studies. Do



you mean that his mind is affected? If so, you must consult a physician. I am not an alienist."

Then Rinaldo set himself to relate the facts, and very absurd they sounded. Here was an elderly devotee of archæological science who had, with many protests, permitted an orphan girl to live under his roof. More he had never done; some little earnings from her embroidery, and the charity of Signor Bianchi's kind-hearted cook had supplied all the rest. Beyond giving her an order as he would to any servant, Signor Bianchi had hardly ever spoken to Giannella, who was the best and most beautiful girl in Rome.

Too much excited to notice De Sanctis's amused smile at this outburst of admiration, Rinaldo went on: "Behold, when she is nearly twenty-one, a certain distinguished lawyer calls upon the Professor and discourses with him at length. Before Ave Maria the next day Signor Bianchi has found out that Giannella is good, that Giannella is pretty, that Giannella cooks polpetti divinely, that Mariuccia really ought to buy her a new dress. There is another visit or two from the distinguished lawyer — and the Professor, who loves money so much that it is like drawing blood to get a few pauls from him for his own food, offers Mariuccia five baiocchi a day for Giannella's board. And when Mariuccia, who is already "stranissima," worried to death with all these new caprices, tells him to go to the devil with his five baiocchi, why then, then, my dear sir, he says he is going to *marry*, marry Giannella, who has lived on his own servant's charity and has not a scudo in the world! Explain to me, Signor



Avvocato, the conduct of this maniac! As the only friend of those two poor distracted women, I have a right to ask you."

De Sanctis stared at Rinaldo incredulously for several seconds after he had ceased speaking. Then, to the young man's amazement, he burst into peals of laughter. Tears of merriment were running down his cheeks before he regained sufficient self-control to speak. Then he looked at Rinaldo (who was red with anger) and managed to say, "And is that really all you know? You are not playing a joke on me?"

"A joke?" cried the artist hotly; "if there is one you are alone in the enjoyment of it. I see no subject for laughter in these distressing facts. Yes, that is all I know, except —"

"Except?" asked De Sanctis, with a fine return to his professional manner.

"Except this," the other continued, "that when Giannella refused his proposal with horror — Domine Dio, had she not reason? — Bianchi went to the Signora Principessa Santafede and persuaded her to take his side. And she sent for Giannella and Mariuccia and preached them each such a sermon that neither found a word to say, and Giannella has cried herself into a fever and says she was born to misfortune, and that if it is her destiny to marry Bianchi she will do her duty like a Christian and die of despair afterwards. Oh, Signor Avvocato, excuse me, but I cannot even think of it. If you have a heart, save us from all this misery."

Rinaldo's head went down on the table and he



sobbed like a Latin and a child — which mean the same thing, very often.

De Sanctis reached over and patted his shoulder consolingly. He was quite convinced now of the young man's good faith, and also of the Professor's perfidy. "Do not afflict yourself, Signor Goffi," he said; "the affair is quite simple. Bianchi is not mad. On the contrary, he is very clever indeed. And the young lady shall marry" — he smiled quizzingly as Rinaldo suddenly raised his head — "shall marry a fine honest young man who is desperately in love with her. I am right, am I not? Are you sure, quite sure, that you want a wife who has not a scudo in the world, who will come to her wedding in the clothes that a poor old servant has given her? It is a serious thing, a wife — there is the future to think of — and, excuse my indiscreetness — you are perhaps not a rich man."

"No," cried Rinaldo, "I am not, thank God. I have had no money to hoard, to worship, to cause my heart to dry up while I am still alive. But I have all the money I need to give that beautiful angel a home and happiness, and also to reward the best Christian I ever knew for her goodness to her. I have my art, my health, a little vigna outside the gates, and I will work for those two women as long as I live, I swear it to you, Signor De Sanctis! And may God abandon me and Our Lady refuse to intercede for me if I break my word!"

"Bravo," said De Sanctis; "and now I fear I must ask you to excuse me, for I have much to do to-day. If you will condescend to return — let me see — the



day after to-morrow, I may perhaps have some consoling news for you."

"You are very good," replied Rinaldo; "you will see Bianchi, you will bring him to reason? If he withdraws his proposal the Princess can have no more to say, and it is the scruple about opposing her which is causing the chief trouble. But I fear the Professor will not be easy to argue with."

"I shall have no difficulty with him," De Sanctis declared; "leave him to me. And meanwhile if you have the opportunity, try, on your part, to make the young lady understand that in this matter her destiny need not involve either martyrdom or suicide. These girls! Oh, you are taking the whole thing too seriously, Signor Goffi. They really enjoy a bit of tragedy if only they can play the saint to an admiring audience while they are acting it."

"Giannella has no silly fancies of that kind," Rinaldo replied hotly. "Mariuccia tells me she never considered the thing for a moment until that meddlesome old Princess undertook to poke her nose into matters she knew nothing about. Could you not see her first, Signor Avvocato, and make her change her mind? It would be easier to convince her than Bianchi."

De Sanctis had bounded in his chair at Rinaldo's audacious words. Now he turned on him angrily, saying, "I must insist that you speak of the most excellent Princess with proper respect. You will please to remember that she is a very noble and pious lady, whom I often have the honor to serve. Only Christian benevolence has led her to interest herself



in the Signorina Brockmann's establishment in life. From her point of view — and being, as I perceive she was, in ignorance of certain facts — a marriage with Bianchi must have appeared most advantageous for the girl. I take it that nothing was told her of your intentions in regard to the latter? No, of course not! That would have been too much to expect of 'two poor distracted women.' Well then, you see that they themselves left the Princess uninformed of an important aspect of the affair. If she condescends to remember the incident the next time she sends for me, all shall be explained to her; but she will probably have forgotten all about it before she returns from Santafede. Persons in her rank of life have many weighty matters to occupy their minds." De Sanctis swelled with importance as he spoke, and Rinaldo accepted the snubbing and henceforth believed that the lawyer was the chief repository of the great lady's confidence. "And so have I!" De Sanctis exclaimed, glancing at his watch. "Santa Pazienza! An hour and a-half have I been giving to your love affairs, my young friend. Now I must turn to serious things. Accidenti! The rain has it in mind to drown us all."



## CHAPTER XIX

THE next afternoon the Cardinal was dictating letters to his chaplain, who also acted as his secretary. A bad cold and the increasing rain were keeping him a prisoner. So he sat in the little crimson-walled study, leaning back in his chair and delivering his sentences in beautiful epistolary Italian, less like every-day colloquial than Horace is like Church Latin. The young priest bent over the table, writing for dear life, torn between his desire to keep up with the silver fluency of the speaker and his ambition to make the large page look like a lithographed example of perfect penmanship.

The entrance of Domenico promised him a breathing space, but it was a vain hope. The Cardinal took no notice of the velvet-footed old man, and continued his dictation. Only when the chaplain rose and brought him the letter for inspection and signature did the master look up at his servant, with a lifting of the eyebrows which said, "What is it? You may speak."

"Eminenza, it concerns the subterraneans," Domenico replied. "The foreman says he will have to quit work, as a good deal of water is coming up through the drain."

"Well then, they must quit," the Cardinal replied, adding, with mild expostulation, "It was not necessary



to come and inform me of that while I was seriously occupied, my son."

"I would not have ventured to come in for that alone, Eminenza," said the man, smiling mysteriously, "but there is something else. In digging to find out whether there was a leak in the chief conduit, they struck upon a little mound, bricked in, and when they opened it they found —"

"The rest of the inscription?" exclaimed the Cardinal, his eyes shining with anticipation.

"More than that, Eminenza. A statue; yes, a statue! Una bellezza!" And he looked down into his master's face with the air of one announcing the conquest of the world.

"Is it possible?" cried the prelate, delighted out of his usual calm. "Do you know what you are saying, Domenico? Oh, it will be some Barocco horror thrown there out of the way. What is it, what is it? Speak."

"How can I tell the Eminenza what it is? I am too uninstructed," the servant replied. "But I went down to see, and I beheld in the hole a large figure with no head and one arm gone — but a fine piece of a man."

The Cardinal rose from his chair. "I must go down at once," he said; "the other letters can be written to-morrow." This to the young priest who stood beside him. "I must see for myself, immediately." And he moved toward the door.

Simultaneously the servant and the chaplain rushed after him, the latter laying a hand on his arm and



Domenico placing himself before the door. "For Heaven's sake," cried the younger man, "let the Eminenza not think of such a thing. The cold, the damp — it would be a most terrible imprudence."

Domenico took a still stronger stand. He held up his hand almost authoritatively and said, "This is a risk not to be run. Let us send at once for Professor Bianchi. He will descend to these catacombs, will see, will comprehend all. Then, having made full inspection, he will come up and tell us all about it. Is not this a better plan, Eminenza mia bella?" he concluded coaxingly.

The Cardinal laughed, sighed and submitted. "I suppose you are right, you two," he said; "you keep me as the carabinieri keep a malefactor. As if it would have hurt me to go down for five minutes! But have your way. Send at once for the Signor Professore, however, and beg him to come at his earliest convenience. Oh, if it could be a true antique! But I dream — who am I to deserve such good fortune, such honor?"

The Professor sent a flowery note in answer to the summons from Palazzo Cestaldini. He would have the honor of waiting upon the Cardinal in the morning, and he thanked him from his heart for permitting a humble seeker after knowledge to share the joy of discovery with him.

All that night, as the rain beat down with ever-increasing violence, the two learned men slept fitfully, dreaming of Greek perfection, turning, even as they looked at it, into some bit of degenerate Roman work,



a coarse, fulsome likeness, with a removable marble wig and beard! Then they would wake to hear the rattle of rain in the streets, the bubbling of unauthorized fountains; and the Professor would shiver with fear lest the reported treasure should be buried, perhaps swept away, in mud; and the Cardinal would fold his beautiful hands over his rosary and pray to be delivered from all undue love of terrestrial things. Giannella, poor child, read over the Princess's letter for the twentieth time, trying to invalidate its solemn, well-worded arguments and failing to quite succeed; and Rinaldo, wide awake too, paced up and down his studio, looked out every few minutes to see if the clouds were not breaking, and called down a monotonous string of curses, all ending with apoplexy, on the heartless elements which were keeping his painted cardinal too moist to pack, and would certainly prevent his seeing Mariuccia in the church next morning to exchange tidings and sympathy.

When he looked down in the gray of the morning, the little court and street beyond were sheeted in water. Three months' heat and drought were being atoned for in the torrential downpour. All over the lower part of the city the sewers were throwing up volumes of muddy liquid choked back from its customary outlets by the rise in the river. On the front porch of San Severino no picket of mendicants was stationed to-day. When Fra Tommaso came down to open the doors not even the privileged cripple was there to lift the curtain for him. The old sacristan stood under the portico and surveyed the street with



a troubled face. "Libera nos, Domine!" he murmured as he turned back into the church. "Fiat Voluntas Tua, yes, Lord, but oh, please, of Your Condescension, do not send any dying calls to-day. That time, five years ago, when the big flood came, and the priest and the boy and I — and the Santissimo — Domine Dio, shall I ever forget it? — were almost tipped out of the boat at that corner by the bridge. Oh, not to-day, please, dear Lord. The poor souls could not get to You through the rain — and think of the angels' wings all wet. If any are to die, please let them wait a day or two, and come to judgment dry at least."

In the Professor's household consternation reigned, for the padrone announced that he would get to Palazzo Cestaldini — if he had to swim there. And Mariuccia, racked with anxieties, did not display her usual energy in opposing him. Giannella, shocked out of her absorption in her own affairs, took it upon herself to beg him to consider his precious health and safety, and to remain at home. This evidence of interest greatly pleased her elderly wooer and emboldened him to pat her on the cheek and tell her that after next week, when they were married, he would always listen to her advice, but now he really must go out. Would she bring him his thickest boots?

Giannella, scarlet and resentful, rushed back to the kitchen, and Mariuccia brought him the boots, soles uppermost, while she pointed in grim silence at a large hole in one of them. But the Professor pretended not to see it, and five minutes later he was out in the piazza,



his umbrella turned inside out, his big cloak ballooning into black wings around him, his eyeglasses rendered useless by streams of water, but his will sternly set on reaching Palazzo Cestaldini as soon as possible. After a few laments over his obstinacy the two women upstairs relapsed into silence, and all was very quiet on the fourth floor, as the morning dragged its wet length on.

It went yet more slowly for Rinaldo. Twenty-four hours had passed since his interview with De Sanctis, and although the lawyer had told him nothing, yet he had comforted him greatly, and Rinaldo longed to impart some of that comfort to Giannella. He was the more anxious to do this at once because the flood was evidently assuming serious proportions and he might at any moment be called upon to take his place in the ranks of helpers to save property and distribute provisions. It was now ten o'clock, but the storm was laying a pall of darkness over the city, and the dampness crept up even to the studio on the roof with a chill sufficient to terrify the fever-fearing Roman. Rinaldo, ruefully contemplating yesterday's boots, soaking and shapeless, and the second best suit still limp and damp on its peg, rapidly calculated the chances of gaining admittance should he go boldly to Bianchi's door and ask for Mariuccia. His last experiences in that way had been memorably disagreeable, and in the diminution of martial spirit caused by the gray, wet morning, Rinaldo rather shrank from repeating them. Yet he was consumed with anxiety lest Giannella, her powers of resistance also lessened by illness



and by the general depression, should select this day, of all days, to immolate herself on the altar of phantom duty, obey the Principessa, and consent to espouse Bianchi. That once done, who could tell how things would turn out? She was a northerner by blood, and Rinaldo had heard that northerners were dreadfully in earnest about trifles like promises; she might consider her given word as too binding to be recalled. Yes, he must see Giannella at once; that risk was not to be run. Grumbling at Themistocles, who sat, sulky and dragged, on the mustard-colored head of the lay figure, he pulled on his wet boots and descended the staircase, where walls and steps were oozing with moisture. At the lower entrance he paused and looked up and down the street. Across the way old Sora Rosa had removed her perishable wares and stood on her doorstep, so far carried out of her usual saturnine impassiveness as to be wringing her hands and cursing volubly. When she saw Rinaldo about to brave the elements she called out to him to go back, out of danger. The Tiber was out; the municipal guards had been round to warn all who lived on ground floors to move as quickly as possible — no one could say how high the water would rise.

But Rinaldo flourished his umbrella valiantly, plunged out, slipped and found himself ankle deep in the muddy stream. Regaining the sidewalk he struggled along towards the Piazza Santafede. It was hard work to get there, but never mind, all the more reason for pressing on. The Bianchi apartment was so high up that its denizens were far beyond the reach of



danger, but the women might be frightened — there were terrible stories of what the river could do when its temper was roused; or, they might be in need of provisions; that blessed old Professor would not be much of a help to them.

These thoughts helped to tide him over the rough crossing where both the piazza and the Via Tresette were sending their torrents down the Via Santafede to the still lower level of Ripetta. Rinaldo reached the farther side, drenched and half blinded by the rain, which seemed to come from every direction at once, and grasped at the iron chains which swung between truncated pillars all round the old palace. He took one look at the well-known window. Sure enough, there was Mariuccia peering out, deepest anxiety written on her countenance, scanning the Via Santafede from end to end. Rinaldo waved a hand to attract her attention. She saw and recognized him immediately. He could see that she was speaking though no words came to him through the rattle of the rain, but her face lighted up and she beckoned to him beseechingly. How fortunate that he had been so courageous as to come.

Still clinging to the helpful chains, he reached the palace entrance and paused to survey a strange scene. Wetness and confusion reigned everywhere, horses were neighing and kicking in the flooded stables, and resisting the harassed grooms who were trying to lead them out. The young Prince, with some other gentlemen, was actually attempting to coax one beautiful animal up the grand staircase, a promotion for which



it evidently had no desire; and, a few steps further up, stood an irate woman, the Princess's housekeeper, frantically forbidding the indecent sacrilege. Every time she waved her arms and shouted her protests the nervous, high-spirited hunter danced and shied, and finally began to rear and paw the air in menacing fashion. The Prince, scarlet with anger, quieted him down, called a red-headed groom to hold his head, and then, dashing up the steps, seized the woman in his arms, dragged her down the steps and flung her into the porter's lodge opposite, where he turned the key on her! She stood behind the glass door, battering it with her fists and weeping copiously. The way being now clear, the horse was induced to try it, and finding that the red velvet carpet afforded comfortable foothold, mounted, with his excited bodyguard, and the whole group, chattering and laughing, disappeared round the first turn of the stairs.

Much amused at this comedy, Rinaldo climbed to the Professor's apartment and found Mariuccia waiting for him on the landing.

"Figlio mio bello," she cried, "thank Heaven you have come. But, for you — what craziness to venture through this deluge! You are half drowned, poverino. Come in and dry your clothes, and then tell me what to do, for we are in despair about the padrone. He went off this morning soon after eight o'clock, and I know he will never get back again. That man cannot be trusted to take care of himself. I am sure he will come to some harm."

Rinaldo stared at her, forgetting his own discom-



fort, his anxieties about Giannella, everything, in his amazement at her speech. "What?" he cried, "you are trembling — I do believe, crying — over what may happen to that selfish old cataplasm of a Professor? Madonna mia, you women are inexplicable. It would be a good thing if he never came back at all."

Mariuccia glared at him for one instant, then dealt him a sounding box on the ear. "Infamous one," she screamed, "you dare to wish death to my padrone? Oh, may you and your best dead —"

But the curse never descended, for Giannella, pale and terrified, suddenly parted the combatants, dragging Mariuccia away and waving Rinaldo back with an imploring gesture; to tell the truth, he was furiously angry, and his flashing eyes and clenched fists seemed to indicate that he might so far forget himself as to return the blow. At sight of the girl he loved, looking so pitiful in her fear and distress, all his anger left him, and he held out his hands, saying contritely, "It is nothing, Giannella mia, I spoke like a fool, an animal. Sora Mariuccia must forgive me. I wish no harm to her padrone — quite the contrary, for I wish he were more worthy of her faithfulness. Happy he, to have such a valiant defender!"

"Come in, come in," Giannella replied. "Holy Charity, you are wet through. What a terrible day. Mariuccia mia, I am sure Signor Goffi did not mean what he said just now, and he has been so brave to come to us through this dreadful storm — won't you bring him in near the fire and give him some coffee? And then, perhaps, he will find out where the padrone



is and bring him back to us. Oh, but we have been so unhappy about him," she continued, turning her serious eyes to Rinaldo, "you do not know. If anything were to happen to him we should never get over it."

"You too," Rinaldo murmured as he followed her and Mariuccia (silent and mollified now) into the passage. "Well," he reflected, "it is said that he who understands women understands all things. I renounce the attempt." He was slightly nettled at the calmness with which Giannella had taken command of the situation, vouchsafing him no single glance which showed her consciousness of their own enchanting secret. He did not notice that her cheeks were no longer pale, but of a deep pink, and that her voice was uncertain, as if with the effort to repress some strong emotion. Her actions at any rate were prompt and business-like. Having led the way to the kitchen, where the charcoal fire made a pleasant glow in the unnatural gloom, she pushed Mariuccia down into one of the old straw-bottomed chairs, set the other near the range for Rinaldo, got his wet coat away from him with a turn of the hand, and made him slip on an old jacket of Bianchi's; then she poured out a cup of steaming coffee, produced a ciambella to accompany it, and disappeared. She returned in a moment with a pair of slippers and some much-darned green socks, which last she warmed at the fire while Rinaldo drank his coffee and wondered what she meant to do with them — and him.

She turned round, the socks rolled up between her



hands, and offered them to him with the slippers, all in the most collected way, as if she had ministered to his wants for the last twenty years. He started back, flushing furiously, for feet, as a subject, are almost as improper in Rome as in China; and besides, all this was painfully unlike the tenderly romantic meeting he had dreamed of. Was she never going to look into his eyes and let him see that she remembered who he was?

She came close to him and still he sat silent, gazing up hungrily into her face. Ah, there it came, the mantling color, the quivering of the lips, the lowering of the eyelids as if to veil some too bright flame.

"Take them, signorino," she said, speaking huskily and holding the things out to him, "excuse that they are old. You can go into the other room and put them on. You will catch cold — like this — I am afraid —"

But she did not finish the sentence. Rinaldo suddenly caught her two hands in his and hid his face in them, kissing her fingers, the socks, and her soft little palms with an indiscriminate adoration, with an abandonment of joyful passion which touched the girl's whole being to fire. It seemed in that moment that her life and his were fused into one triumphant essence, steeped in glory.

"Mamma mia," wailed a forgotten voice from very far away, from the window, in fact, where Mariuccia had several minutes earlier resumed her watch for her lost lamb, "it gets worse and worse. It would take Sant' Antonio and his mantle to get across the



street now. Oh, where is my poor little padrone?"

She turned back into the room with a tragic sweep of the arm, as if asking the question of two young people, who stood several feet apart, with some strange-looking objects on the floor between them.

It was now twelve o'clock and Mariuccia insisted on getting Rinaldo some dinner; and then, his coat being a little drier, she suggested that he should at once start on his search for the missing Professor, who had said that he was only going to Palazzo Cestaldini and would come home for his dinner.

"Palazzo Cestaldini?" Rinaldo replied; "that is only a short way from here, but there will be difficulty in traversing the distance now without a boat. The Cardinal has surely kept the Signor Professore with him."

"I cannot be certain," Mariuccia persisted; "the padrone is — well, obstinate, and when he wants to come home he will come or try to — and then he will get into trouble. Do go out and look for him, signorino."

"But, Mariuccia, how can you?" Giannella protested indignantly. "The signorino can do nothing — and he may be drowned. Oh, pray do not go out," she exclaimed, clasping her hands and looking at Rinaldo imploringly. Something had evidently removed the padrone from the foreground of her thoughts.

Her anxiety for himself so filled her lover with delight that he felt inspired for any exploit. "Of course I will go," he cried; "nothing can drown me! I can swim like a fish; and it is only a pleasure to serve you,



Sora Mariuccia. If a boat is needed I dare say I can find some of my friends to help me. Ah, what is that? ”

A sound of laughter and of oars beating the water came up through the open window. Three heads were out in a moment, and then Rinaldo hailed Peppino and some other youths who, with many bumps and splashes, had just steered two shallow punts into the Via Santafede from the Ripetta. “Hi, boys!” he shouted, “wait for me, I must come with you. Round to the portone in the piazza, Peppino.”

“Make haste then,” was the reply; “we are out on duty. One of the bridges is gone, Ripetta is a sea, and the water is two feet deep in Piazza Navona. Hurry!”

Rinaldo dashed off and flew down the long flights of stairs. One boat went round to meet him, while the other continued on its way to Piazza Navona, the chief market-place of the city. Five minutes later a boat shot down again towards Ripetta, and Rinaldo nearly dropped a paddle in the effort to kiss his hand to the two heads still leaning out of the fourth-floor window, one grizzled and dark as fate, the other golden and lovely as hope’s young dream.

When he was out of sight the women were silent for a little, then Giannella’s face sank down on her old friend’s shoulders, and Mariuccia put her arms round her and comforted her quite tenderly, for the poor child was shivering with fear for her lover. “Why did you send him?” she wailed; “he will surely be drowned.” She had never seen a flood before ex-



cept from the safe heights of the convent villa, and it seemed terrible that her Rinaldo, so dear and beautiful and young, should have to face its dangers.

“Hush, cocca mia,” crooned the old woman, “nothing will happen to him. Those boys are as safe in the water as on land. I wish I had asked him to bring us some bread — there is not a scrap left — and that was the last of the wine.”

“Take some of the padrone’s then,” said Giannella vindictively; “he has cost enough to-day, dragging that poor, brave boy out into such perils to look for him. He shall pay in bread and wine at least.”



## CHAPTER XX

THE avvocato De Sanctis lived in the Via Condotti, on higher ground by some feet than the other end of the Ripetta. About the time when Bianchi, fired with enthusiasm, was wading joyfully towards Palazzo Cestaldini, the lawyer issued from his door with the same goal in view. He had business with the Cardinal's maestro di casa concerning some houses in the suburbs, his Eminence's property, of which the leases were expiring, and which would require repairs before fresh contracts could be signed. One secret of De Sanctis's success in his profession was his very un-Italian habit of attending to each detail as it came up, whenever that was possible. He was sure that the bad weather would keep clients away to-day, and, undeterred by it himself, set out to clear one piece of business off his crowded list. Of course there was not a cab in sight, but he persevered, keeping to the higher levels till it was necessary to strike off to the right to reach the back entrance of Palazzo Cestaldini, which the Professor had also fortunately recollected, thus avoiding the "sea" which, as Peppino had assured Rinaldo, had already taken possession of the long street which forms the southern bank of the Tiber.

Signor Bianchi had been warmly welcomed by the Cardinal, who was feeling very unwell, poor gentle-



man; a fact which he concealed from his guest, merely saying that he regretted not being able to accompany him on his search and thanking him for being willing to undertake it in such unfavorable circumstances. He conscientiously pointed out that Bianchi was committing an imprudence in doing so; the vaults were always damp, and just now probably some inches under water. But the Professor made light of his warnings and begged to be allowed to descend at once. Many valuable fragments had been found in and around the palace, which, like so many others, was largely built out of ancient and mediæval remains: a headless male figure, the head was probably close by — perhaps he himself would find it! So two workmen were summoned to accompany him with picks and lanterns, and a few minutes later he was in his element, grubbing about in the vast dark crypt, regardless of time, weather, hunger, or any of the other conditions which call a halt to humanity in everyday life.

He had been thus employed for some hours when the avvocato De Sanctis, having ended his business with the maestro di casa, inquired if he might have the honor of paying his respects to the Cardinal. He was much attached to the kind prelate, whom he regarded as very good company, and who in his turn felt sincere affection for the hard-working young lawyer who had attained success without ceasing to be an honest Christian.

This morning, however, the Cardinal received him with a slight expression of amusement. He had felt feverish the evening before; his anxious attendants



had hastily summoned his doctor, who had administered some of the heroic remedies with which the local pharmacopœia bristled in those prehistoric days; and the Cardinal thought that the doctor and the rest, believing his life to be in danger, had followed his general directions that on the first hint of such a possibility his confessor and his man of business were to be sent for without a moment's delay. The confessor, Padre Anselmo, from San Severino, had not appeared, but here was De Sanctis, doubtless prepared to receive his expiring instructions. When De Sanctis, after kissing his patron's ring, explained that having had to call on professional affairs, he availed himself of the opportunity to inquire after the illustrious health, the Cardinal smiled indulgently.

"Figlio mio," he said, "I know all about these kind little accidental visits. The doctor, and my chaplain, and that good old servant of mine, thought that I was in danger, that the discovery of a statue in the cellar had excited my nerves and brought on fever. So they summoned you to attend my deathbed. I am surprised at not having yet received a visit from Padre Anselmo, but they probably thought I could attend to spiritual matters better when earthly ones were off my mind. Kind souls, I am grateful to you all, and I trust that when I am in extremis you will comfort me with your presence, but I think I shall be allowed to give you plenty of trouble yet. I feel much better this morning, though naturally a little weakened by our distinguished physician's prescriptions. At my age, Guglielmo, one cannot be freely bled, and dosed with



quinine and palma christi, without certain remorse of nature making themselves felt." He laid two fingers delicately on his broad red waistbelt to indicate the region of physical contrition, "but as I said, I am much better this morning, in spite of the terrible weather."

"It gives me happiness to hear that, Eminenza," De Sanctis replied, "for I was grieved to learn, on my arrival here, of your Eminence's indisposition. Word of an honest man, that was the first I heard of it. No one sent for me on that account. But the Eminenza must be very careful for the next few days. The flood will cause much sickness in the town, and the damage done is already great. I have noted with satisfaction that this respected palace was built with forethought for such emergencies, the whole level of the courtyard being considerably higher than that of the street."

"An arrangement I have often murmured at," the Cardinal said, "for the steep incline under the portone makes the horses slip, and the coachman objects to waiting there. However, in times like these one appreciates the necessity of it. He is a treacherous neighbor, Sor Tevere. There is already a good deal of water in the cellars, Domenico says, and I fear that poor Professor Bianchi is exposing himself to catch a bad cold."

"Professor Bianchi, Eminenza?" De Sanctis pricked up his ears. "Is he in the vaults?"

"Where else?" replied the Cardinal, turning on him a glance of mild surprise; "naturally he is examin-



ing the statue. It is my misfortune that I cannot be at his side, but Heaven's will be done. See, I have just received this note from him." And he handed a scrap of paper to the lawyer. Scribbled on it was these words: "Probably a Hermes. Græco-Roman. Fine preservation. Seeking for head."

As De Sanctis read, his eyes began to gleam with suppressed humor. His familiar little demon of malice was whispering in his ear. He rose to take his leave, and the Cardinal, who had been watching the sheets of rain slipping down the window-panes, turned to him, saying, "Yes, go home, my son, for unless you do that quickly you will have difficulty in reaching your house."

"Is there anything I can do for the Eminenza first?" De Sanctis inquired.

"Only this," said the Cardinal, "I shall be much obliged if you will be so kind as to speak to the Professor and beg him, with my compliments, to consider his health and desist from further work in that damp spot, for the present. Please say, however, that I trust he will honor me with another visit before taking his departure."

"Your Eminence shall be obeyed," De Sanctis replied. "But may I venture to remind you that if he returns upstairs and the flood increases, he may have to stay here all day. That would be a great fatigue for the Eminenza, I fear."

"Fatigue?" The Cardinal's fine face lighted up as he spoke. "No, indeed. A pleasure, a rare pleasure. We are two old enthusiasts, Guglielmo, and



have a thousand subjects of interest to discuss. I know of no one whom I would rather have for my companion at such a time than that learned man. I sit at his feet — as a humble disciple. I reap instruction as he speaks.”

“Doubtless, doubtless,” the lawyer replied gravely. “I will execute the commission at once.”

As he sped down the stairs he laughed softly. “It is not professional,” he told himself, “but it will be great fun, and he really deserves a fright.”

An hour later the Cardinal touched his handbell and Domenico’s wrinkled face at once appeared in the doorway. “Is the Signor Professore still in the vaults?” the master inquired. “Please go down and see. It is most imprudent for him to remain there any longer.”

In ten minutes the servant returned, looking rather scared. “Eminenza,” he said, “the gentleman must have left without coming upstairs. It is impossible to go down into the vaults — they are full of water.”

The Cardinal seemed disappointed. “That is unfortunate,” he said at last, “but you need not be alarmed, my good Domenico. You know there is nothing there to be injured, the foundations are solid, and, thank Heaven, the statue cannot swim away. The Professor was right to leave at once — I hope he did not get a chill. Yes, you may bring my soup now, and then I will sleep a little.” As Domenico retired, his master shook his head over his own weakness. “Paolo mio,” he told himself, “you are a very imperfect kind of creature. You are really disappointed



because you have been cheated of hearing all Bianchi had to say about the discovery. What children we all are — clamoring for our playfellows and turning sulky when we are deprived of them.”

The vaults of Palazzo Cestaldini were much older than the dwelling itself, being the indestructible remains of an Imperial mausoleum which above ground had been partially overthrown in the course of centuries of fighting, and then unscrupulously utilized as material for the new palace. The vaults, deep and wide, ran the whole length of the frontage, and were dimly lighted by heavily grated windows some three feet above the level of the outer street. From within the space had the appearance of a subterranean church with windows set high up in the walls; from without, the few who were curious enough to look down through the bars could see only depths of darkness with here and there a corner of worn masonry catching the light. From the ground, thirty feet below the windows, there rose on the street side a series of shallow steps, like tiers in an amphitheater; these ran the whole length of the wall and were surmounted by a narrow platform from which it was possible to look out on the upper world. In truth the crypt had been adapted by one of Paolo Cestaldini's ancestors for spectacular purposes, the adjacent river, with its many conduits, providing all that was necessary for mimic aquatic shows. Later, in more troubled times, it had sheltered great numbers of fighting men, and the barred windows had been crowded with rough faces and picturesque costumes, and had served as



loopholes and defenses in many a joyful riot. In these days the vaulted roofs were gray with cobwebs and dark with moisture. In one distant corner lay a pile of rococo plaster figures, used long ago for some carnival pageant and then flung aside, legs and arms interlaced and broken, to crumble into a gruesome resemblance to blanched corpses deprived of burial.

These melancholy surroundings struck chill on the lawyer's humor as he descended the stairs and peered round for the Professor. Ah, there he was, down on his knees digging madly at a mound of earth; one of his workmen had left him; the other was holding a lantern for him with evident impatience to be gone. Water was trickling and lapping somewhere, and everything underfoot was moist and slippery, but the Professor seemed unconscious of all but his quest. He stood up suddenly, one hand to his aching back, the other raised in triumph. "The head!" he shouted. "I can feel it through the mold. Nunc Dimittis!" And he went down on his knees again and began to remove the earth with extreme care, his face streaming with perspiration, his spectacles two shifting blots of light in the beams of the lantern.

Suddenly this was set down with a clang and the workman flew past De Sanctis towards the exit. "Come away!" he cried, pointing at the same time to the stairs, down which a thin, continuous sheet of water was flowing. "The river is out at last. There will be a sea here in half-an-hour."

"Rubbish," replied De Sanctis, "that is only the rain." And he came stealthily to Bianchi's side and,



laying a heavy hand on his shoulder, bent down and said sternly, "Signor Professore, what have you done with Giannella Brockmann's money?"

The Professor leaped to his feet with a scream and his pick fell from his hand. He stared in the lawyer's face, his own sickly with fear. In the scant up-thrown rays of the lantern it was impossible to distinguish more than a pair of gleaming black eyes and an accusing scowl; the rest was dreadful shadow.

But ere another word had been spoken a ripple of water broke round De Sanctis's feet. "Diamini, but he was right, that man!" he exclaimed; and in an instant he too had dashed away towards the stairs.

In that instant Bianchi had recognized him and breathed again. It was only De Sanctis, after all; an inconvenient, intrusive person to whom unimportant matters could easily be explained some other time. Meanwhile he must hasten to uncover, and feast his eyes on, the marble head which he was certain lay close to his hand; he must carry it up to the Cardinal himself, if it were not too heavy. What a triumph that would be. Ah, gently — there showed a gleam of whitish surface. Hands now, not to injure the precious thing. Doubled over, down on his knees, he worked like a demon, with blackened fingers and earth-choked nails, till at last it lay revealed, a calm immortal countenance gazing up at him with eyes that seemed to have been seeing in the grave; full, closed lips smiling as if with Olympic scorn at the hopes and fears of perishable man. Some under-ripple of life seemed to be pulsing over the broad brow, the divinely moulded



cheeks and chin. Bianchi sank back on his knees, his hands clasped, trembling with unbearable joy.

"Greek, Greek," he whispered, as the saints have whispered prayers in ecstatic trances, "purest Greek. There were but five or six in the whole world — I have found one more. Dio mio, Dio mio, let me not die of happiness."

He seized the light and bent tenderly to uncover the throat. Ah, there it was, the original severance; the cement still clung to it where it had been attached to the beautiful but far less ancient figure which lay prone in mutilated grandeur in the trench, some twenty yards away. The Professor bent closer still over the perfect thing, touching the creamy marble with his cheek, with his tongue, while he rubbed the mould off his fingers with his coat tails, his shirt front, anything to leave their sensitive tips free to feel the marvelous surface, as different from that of the figure yonder as true old Sevres from modern imitation. Fra Tommaso was right; Bianchi could have told it in the dark, that touch of the creator's chisel during the one short period of perfect sculpture our world has ever known, the touch which made every atom of the marble its living vehicle, which gave the uneven yet flawless surface so closely resembling human flesh that the senses tell us it breathes and dimples with the very tide of life. Brought to Rome by Greece's conquerors, fitted to a body wrought, at the command of an imperious ignorant master, by a Greek sculptor in captivity, remembering through his tears the glories of Greece's past — here was an immortal crown to which



the stately figure had served as a humble pedestal. What wonder that Carlo Bianchi, in his passionate reverence for true art, trembled and worshiped, and shivered with insane joy—while inch by inch the turbid waters of the Tiber rose on the floor of his fane, poured in from the ten great windows high in the wall a hundred feet away, covered the statue in the trench and crept up the hollow at the foot of the stairs, gurgling pleasantly on the steps as it reached them one by one.

When it had cut off retreat behind him it swam forward with a leap, broke over him where he knelt, drowned the white glory from his side and swept his extinguished lantern far beyond his reach.

Then indeed he sprang to his feet. But they slipped from under him and he fell forward, his hand landing on the cold, submerged face. In a moment he was up again, wading through the fast-rising flood, staggering towards the blackness which shrouded the stairway. But long before he reached it the shelving ground was letting him down, down into the water, and at last he turned and struggled back in the direction of the distant windows, gray blurs now upon an enormous pall of darkness, with something that caught a gleam of light flowing in and sliding over their edges. Again and again he fell, betrayed by the uneven ground and the swaying current. He was wet to the skin but he did not know it. For once in his semi-vitalized existence he was awake to all realities. He knew that unless he could attain to some higher level there would soon be another cold body lying among the antiquities in the crypt.



As he fell for the third time and scrambled up with his mouth and eyes full of water, another reality, forgotten in the joy of his discovery, and then in the fever of self-preservation, recurred to his mind. He remembered Giannella, his all but fraudulent concealment of her inheritance, his machinations to effect a marriage with her before she should learn of it. If he were to die (oh, horrid thought!) would not the Judge of souls ask him the same question that that brigand De Sanctis had asked, "What have you done with Giannella Brockmann's money?" Carlo Bianchi could certainly say "Domine Dio, it is all there I have not spent a penny of it yet. It is at interest in the Banco di Roma, three and a half per cent." Then the Lord would say, "All there, two hundred scudi, and you have not let that poor child have the shoes she needs so badly? You have let Mariuccia, who has saved you money for twenty years, continue to work hard and eat little so as to share her wages with Giannella Brockmann? Miser, idolater, begone! My good San Pietro, have the kindness to take this sinner away and send him to hell at once."

Then it would be all over; and Carlo Bianchi would have to roast, and gnash his teeth, and have nothing to look at for all eternity but ugly grinning devils. No beautiful angels with Greek heads and Roman — no, Græco-Roman, bodies. Would the wings be strong enough to carry all that marble? Good God, he was going mad. And the water was up to his waist. One more fight he must make for life, for nice dry clothes, for Mariuccia's golden fries, for his cigar and slip-



pers and *The Archæological Review* after dinner. Also, of course, for the chance to undo the intended wrong to Giannella and get it erased from his account this side of judgment. He vowed miserably that if the mercy of God would but bring him safely out of this pit of destruction, his first act should be to tell Giannella everything and give her even the whole two hundred scudi to squander on shoes, ribbons, chocolates, theaters, anything she liked. And (yes, the water was certainly getting deeper) he would promise not to marry her unless she were quite willing. Higher than that, human nature could not rise.

When he had registered these generous vows he felt quite light-hearted as to eternity, and more confident of reaching physical safety. Now he was at the foot of the steps below the windows. Blessed steps. He had forgotten their existence. He scrambled up them and sank down on one, exhausted and dripping, but above the level of the flood. There was just enough daylight here for him to see the perils he had escaped. He shivered as he looked back on the expanse of black choppy water lost in the shadows from which he had come.

The sense of relief was great, but it was uncomfortably tempered by finding that a thin sheet of liquid was flowing over his cold seat, from the window above him, so he rose wearily and reached the window itself at last. Standing there clinging to the bars, he looked out at a changed upper world. The view seemed to embrace water everywhere. Well-known landmarks of old Ripetta, a pillar here,



a battered statue there, a lamp-post all awry a little farther on — these seemed to be holding their own with difficulty in the shadow tossing stream which swept by, sending billow after billow through his opening and carrying past the strangest kind of flotsam in its course. An open umbrella came dancing towards him like an evil bird with claws to its wings; then a derelict hencoop from some poulterer's shop, followed first by a wicker cradle and then by a floating island of cabbages and carrots sustaining a pair of old boots. Not a human being was in sight, and the poor prisoner's heart sank within him, for he knew that only a speedy rescue could save him from the effects of the chill which already had him in its grip, causing his teeth to chatter pitifully.

Suddenly he gave a shout, and waved an arm wildly through the bars. Far down the street a boat had appeared, a boat with three or four men in it, surely one of the rescue parties which never fail to give aid in these periodical calamities. Heaven had taken pity on him; and at once he began to think that in his recent excitement he had promised Heaven too high a price for its mercies. Perhaps the arrangement would have to be revised; he must reflect seriously before permitting Giannella to embark on a course of extravagance and dissipation.

Again he waved his arms and shouted to the boat. Oh horror, it was turning round — he could see its side rocking in the swirl of the current — it was heading the other way! It was gone!



## CHAPTER XXI

“**W**HO is it that is missing?” Peppino had asked of Rinaldo as their boat was finally coaxed round the corner of Via Santafede into the Ripetta, shipping a good deal of muddy water in the process.

Rinaldo did not reply till this was bailed out; then, straightening himself and resuming his rowing, he replied, “Old Bianchi. You know him, boys, the archæologist. Those poor women think he is drowning somewhere. It is only on their account that I care what becomes of him.”

“Bianchi? Bianchi?” came the chorus of scorn from three cheerful youths with a wholesome contempt for age and learning. “Ber Bacco!” “It requires a face! To take us off real work to look for that old bat!” “Know him, who doesn’t? And who would so much as cross the street to help him?”

Rinaldo waited till he could make himself heard, then he said laughing at their protests, “You need not even do that. He is down there in Palazzo Cestaldini, with the Cardinal. See, it is on this side and quite near.”

“Put about,” came Peppino’s sharp command, and Rinaldo was obliged to obey with the rest, who were executing the manœuver with much alacrity. “Now,” Peppino continued, when they were once more heading down stream, “we will go where we



are wanted, to help the bakers save their bread and the butchers their meat. Are we to let the city starve to-morrow, because old 'Brontolone' is sitting in peace and comfort with the Cardinal in the piano nobile of Palazza Cestaldini? What do those females take us for? Pull for Piazza Navora."

"As you will, heartless one," Rinaldo replied, "only we were so near that it would not have taken five minutes to assure ourselves that the old brigand was still there, and I could have called up to the women that he was safe."

"Of course he is safe," snorted Peppino. "The women must learn sense and have patience. There is man's work to do now. Look out."

They were turning a corner again and bumped into a big boat full of "guardie," the semi-military police who were responsible for the order of the city. The leader hailed them joyfully and at once attached them to his force for the rest of the day, a day of uncommonly hard work for the easy-going young men.

A strange sight met their eyes when they reached Piazza Navona. In spite of yesterday's warnings, flower sellers, fruit vendors, dealers in secondhand wares of every kind had installed themselves at break of day in their usual spots; and when, a few hours later, the sewers had suddenly gushed with improvised torrents, the unwary market people had lost their heads, and, unfortunately, a good deal of their property. The pyramid of huge water-melons piled round the base of the central obelisk now rose like



a green island in a muddy sea. The two rococo fountains, fed from far away in the country through uncontaminated conduits, tossed their spray into the air and flung down sheets of pure crystal to meet the turbid, evil-smelling contributions which had submerged their basins; Bernini's grotesque Tritons grinned fixedly on the ever increasing disaster below them; and the long florid porch of the church of Sant' Agnese, raised on its marble steps above the danger level, was covered from end to end with salvage over which the owners were weeping and wringing their hands. One old crone stood leaning far out, fishing valiantly with her umbrella for a basket of lace which wobbled round just out of reach, its bundles of heavy, handmade edgings unrolling on the wavelets, while a bit of priceless old Venetian — such as collectors would love and the uninitiated regard as a rag — was twisting itself round the loosening laths of a towel-horse which had been its neighbor on the paving stones. Old books and engravings, prints of saints in prayer and goddesses in flirtation, danced along shoulder to shoulder with plucked chickens and bobbing lemons; some urchins on the church steps were daring each other to wade after the spoils of the frying stall, which still wafted entrancing odors of hot oil to their discriminating little noses.

After the first stress had been relieved Peppino and his comrades, known as they were for expert watermen, were told off to go through the lowlying streets nearest the river, where the inhabitants, driven, some hours earlier, from the ground floors to upper stories,



might be in need of supplies. Well loaded with provisions they set out, stopping below the windows whence they were hailed, and sending up rations in the baskets which came swinging down on strings, the coppers for the food rattling inside them. Women called out, entreating the rescuers to go and look for missing men of the family; but there was no delaying for these appeals, and each and all received the truly Roman answer, "He is safe, we have just seen him." That not one of the party knew the name or face of the absent one made no difference at all. No loss of life had been reported or was likely to be, so the statement as to safety would probably be justified, while as to the other — well, distressed females must be pacified, and a good common-sense lie was the only practical means of doing that.

There were other calls, however, which were instantly responded to. In one house there was sudden sickness; a terrified woman screamed to the men, and Rinaldo caught the word "Miserere," the synonym for the fruit season scourge which slays in twelve hours. With all their might they pulled for the nearest apothecary, threatened him with instant death if he did not find his remedies in the twinkling of an eye, and then laid violent hands on him and bore him back to the stricken house, where they left him, disregarding his crazed entreaties that they would wait and take him home again.

Then came a still more urgent call; a woman was dying and wanted the priest. Noting the street and number they promised the scared relatives to bring



one. Pausing for a moment they consulted as to the position of the nearest. Peppino remembered his topography while the others were still looking round them, and issued his orders. Some ten minutes later the crew pulled up before the front steps of San Severino, and agile Peppino bounded up them, three at a time, to summon the sacristan. Rinaldo was tired of sitting on the narrow thwart, and he too sprang out and stood on the steps, holding the boat with the boathook. All was so changed by the strange aspect of the flood that he at first failed to recognize the spot. His acquaintance with his parish church had been chiefly carried on through the back entrance, but as he stood looking up at the sky, which was clearing now, with sulky shafts from the low sun tearing red rifts in the inky clouds, a sense of familiarity came over him. Baring his heated brow he looked up, down, around. Why, of course, it was Giannella's church, and Giannella herself was only a few hundred yards away, waiting, with that adorable anxiety for him still in her eyes; weeping, perhaps, in her fear lest harm had come to him. He must get to her somehow, and tell her that he had not forgotten her for a moment (a brazen untruth, but how could any woman understand that even the most faithful masculine heart has no room for sentiment in the midst of action?), but that every oar and every pair of hands had been urgently needed throughout that long trying day. How glad she would be to see him. Though of course she would pretend to be still concerned about that animal,



Bianchi, of whose society the Cardinal must be horribly tired by this time if he had not managed to ship him home already. There had not been a moment in which to attend to him, but Rinaldo felt that he could not go back to Giannella without having called at Palazzo Cestaldini at least: well, the day was drawing in, the boys were all tired and hungry; they must quit work soon. After this expedition with the priest, he himself would be free to go and execute the belated commission.

Ah, here he came, the good Father, reverently carrying the veiled chalice, accompanied by a frightened acolyte with a lighted taper, and Fra Tommaso, looking very serious and having much ado to hold up the umbrella canopy and not slip on the wet steps. As they approached, Rinaldo knelt with bared head; then he was on his feet, helping the priest to bestow himself and his precious burden safely. The sacristan knelt in the boat behind him, still sheltering him with the canopy, and the boy climbed in, grinning and delighted now with the novelty of the situation.

It made an impressive picture as the young men, bare-headed and silent, rowed fast down the yellow waterway, where the wavelets were crested with bronze gold in the low rays of the sunset. The priest, looking neither to right nor left, was praying in whispers, Fra Tommaso's deep tones striking in with *Amens* and responses; the lurid sunbeams glowed on his tonsured head, on the gold fringes of the canopy, on the young men's faces stilled to worship by the careful honor of their mission. It was



not far to the house of death, a mean, discolored building in a narrow alley, where pale watchers looking out from the doorway told them they were still wanted, still in time.

The neighbors gathered at their windows, sympathetic and curious. Two or three women lighted candles and held them out in honor of the Santissimo. Then the rowers waited in silence for some twenty minutes, after which the padre reappeared, wrapped and prayerful as before, and he and his attendants were conveyed home.

"Now for supper," exclaimed Peppino. "I die of hunger."

"One moment," said Rinaldo. "We are close to Palazzo Cestaldini, I would just like to make an inquiry there."

There was another outcry from his companions, and at that moment they were all hailed by a passing boat, full of their friends of the River Society. "Come on, boys," they called, "we are all dismissed for the night. We are going to supper in Piazza Colonna — you follow us."

"In a moment," Rinaldo answered, "we have one little thing to do first."

"Nonsense!" protested the others. But Rinaldo was firm this time and the malcontents, calling the other boat alongside, clambered into it and shoved away. Peppino had remained with his friend.

"You could not get this clumsy thing along by yourself, you pig-headed brigand," he growled. "My poor outraged inside is crying for food, but I will



come with you. Pull now — mind that pillar. Here we are, but the portone is closed, and God knows how we are going to get in. Good heavens, what is that?" The current, carrying them swiftly along, had flung the boat-side against the protruding grating of a window just above its tide, and at the same instant a dripping object, apparently a corpse in spectacles, rose behind the bars, a clawlike hand caught at the gunwale, and a yell of entreaty assailed the rowers' ears.

"For the love of God, take me out! Take me out! I perish, I die! Madonna mia Santissima! Take me out!"

"Stop dragging at the boat," cried Peppino when he had recovered his breath. "Who are you? How did you get shut up here?"

"Go to the devil," retorted the shuddering apparition. "Is this a moment for questions? I have been in this sepulcher since the morning. Get me out, I say."

"Santo Dio," gasped Rinaldo, turning nearly as pale as the distracted suppliant, "you — you are Professor Bianchi. Oh, assassin that I am! Yes, I will get you out, instantly. Let go, let go, I can't pull you through the grating."

They had to tear his fingers off the gunwale, for the man was half delirious in his terror of being abandoned. Then with two or three strokes they reached the closed front door and pounded on it, shouting for the porter. Their cries attracted heads to the first-floor windows; Domenico, with the chap-



lain looking over his shoulder, leaned far out and asked what this scandalous uproar meant. Did they know where they were, these audacious ones? This was the Palazza Cestaldini, and the Eminenza was within. If they did not depart at once, the police should be summoned.

Rinaldo shouted down Domenico's reproofs, explaining with extraordinary fluency of invective that some dog, fathered by brigands and mothered by wolves, and doomed with twenty generations of picked ancestors, to eternal fires had kept Professor Bianchi imprisoned, in peril of death, in a flooded crypt, since the morning. Let some Christian, if there was one in that many times cursed household, open the portone and let him come to their victim's rescue.

Then indeed the faces above turned pale with consternation. Domenico vanished, and the chaplain, nearly falling out in his earnestness, clasped his hands and implored the gentleman to be quiet, to moderate the transports of his just indignation. The Eminenza was ill — to learn of this accident suddenly might be fatal to him. But at this point Rinaldo, still calling down the wrath of Heaven on all implicated in the tragedy, heard the heavy bolts withdrawn, and, through the slowly opening portal, saw men standing up to their knees in water and the steep ascent to the courtyard crowded with terrified servants.

Leaving Peppino to take care of the boat, he sprang out and landed among them like a firebrand. In



five minutes he had picked out some likely assistants and had them under orders, carrying ladders, ropes and lanterns down the dark stairway which led from a corner of the courtyard to the subterranean regions.

When they had followed him down to the last step above water in the crypt Rinaldo raised his lantern high above his head and peered across an inky sea to locate the Professor, but all he could make out was a crumpled heap sunk together on the stone platform beneath a window; and no glad cries came from it to answer his encouraging shouts. He tried the depth of the water at his feet and found some seven or eight feet of it; so there was only one thing to do: he coiled a rope round his body, placed one end in the hand of a trembling domestic, with frightful threats of what would overtake him should he let go, and then swam across to the outer wall. There he ran lightly up the steps and lifted the Professor, who had fallen on his face in collapse and unconsciousness at last. The reaction of relief when he had caught at the boat, the agony of disappointment on seeing himself, as his dazed senses told him, again forsaken, had been too much after the horrible experience of the day, and he lay in Rinaldo's arms an inert and heavy mass which it would be by no means easy to carry back. It would be better to have help, so Rinaldo shouted to the men on the steps to go and fetch his friend—and to see that the boat was made fast. A few minutes later Peppino's cheery call sounded up in the echoing darkness of the



vaults, and the splash of his stroke as he shot through the water struck pleasantly on Rinaldo's ear.

Peppino tured white and shrank back when he touched Bianchi's clay-cold hand, but Rinaldo assured him that the man had only fainted — his heart was still beating. Between them they roped him to themselves, slipped smoothly into the water, and swam in perfect unison to the foot of the stairs. There Domenico and the chaplain fell on their necks almost weeping in their thankfulness and their admiration of what they called the young gentlemen's amazing courage. The boys shook them off, laughing, for the little feat was ease and simplicity itself; and then Rinaldo, picking up the still unconscious Professor, imperiously demanded a warm bed for his patient. In an incredible short time the poor chilled victim was rolled up in heated blankets, surrounded by scalding bricks, and Rinaldo made him swallow a draught, the hottest and fieriest that had ever passed his abstemious lips.

He was quite alive now, but a little light-headed. He shed copious tears of relief and weakness while he clung to and kissed Rinaldo's hand, called him Hermes, and vowed that if only he would grow a beard nobody would ever notice the place where his head was joined to his body.

Before all this was accomplished, the Cardinal's bell had been ringing repeatedly, and at last the chaplain and Domenico, the latter quaking with apprehension, presented themselves before him.

“What is this commotion that I have been hear-



ing?" the prelate asked quite sternly. "Twice and three times have I rung the bell and no one has come. I had never imagined that such remissness was possible. Explain."

"Eminenza," Domenico wailed, "there has been trouble, just a little trouble. Nothing serious. Let the Eminenza not be alarmed." This last in compliance to the young priest's grip of his arm and a frowning reminder that the Cardinal must not be agitated.

But Paolo Cestaldini was more than agitated, he was terribly incensed, when the whole miserable story, wrapped in palliations and excuses, was laid before him.

"What?" he cried, his usually gentle face lighted up with a flame of anger, "you actually left that good and illustrious man to suffer, to drown, to accuse you of his death before his Maker? You, Domenico, you never took the trouble to assure yourself that he had left the vault. It is only by Heaven's mercy and that brave young stranger's charity that you are not a murderer to-day. Coward, pagan, without heart, without conscience — how can I ever endure to have you near me again?"

"Eminenza, forgive him," the chaplain besought, "he could not know, he did not reflect. He has served you faithfully for so many years."

"Let the Eminenza have pity upon me!" Domenico implored, falling on his knees with uplifted hands. "I have sinned, yes — but indeed no reasoning person could have figured to himself that the Signor



Professore was still there. The Signor De Sanctis, the two workmen, they went away in the first moment of danger. Was he an infant that he could not follow them? And why did they leave him? Could they not have dragged him with them? Is he not old and thin? *Eminenza mia buona*, the fault is with them, not with me."

The Cardinal still frowned on his contrite retainer, but he was too just not to see that there was sense in his expostulations. He turned to the chaplain who was standing silently by. "Caro mio," he said, "do me the favor to return to our poor friend's bedside — he may require something. I must say a word to Domenico here." When they were left alone he addressed the major-domo: "You have been guilty of the gravest neglect and disobedience, my poor Domenico, for I sent you downstairs with express orders to ascertain whether the Professor was still below. You gave one look from the upper step, you saw water, you returned, very frightened, without having even asked the porter whether he had seen him go out. I shall forgive you this time, and I must in justice admit that you were not the only culprit. Certainly Signor De Sanctis should have let someone know that the other gentleman had remained behind. But I suppose that he was too alarmed and thought only of himself. See, my son, what comes of selfishness! It is the ugliest of all the sins, the one which Satan finds ready to his hand in every human heart. It makes a man of education as stupid and cruel as the



beasts. Hell would be to let in a day but for selfishness."

"Yes, indeed, Eminenza," said Domenico quickly. He always knew that he was forgiven when his master embarked on a sermon and that light of charity and sorrow began to shine in his eyes. But the sermons were apt to be long, and just now the old man knew that he might be wanted elsewhere. The Cardinal's physician had been summoned to attend the Professor, remedies would be ordered, a servant would have to be dispatched somehow to the apothecary — and what with the flood and the accident, the servants were like a pack of frightened children this evening! Oh, a dozen matters were certainly requiring his attention at the other end of the house; he was the central wheel of the big solemn establishment, the channel for every order, the paymaster for every bill — and so jealous of his proud cares that no other member of the household was ever allowed to act on his own initiative for a moment. Everything began and ended with Sor Domenico — so the beloved Eminenza must be induced to dismiss him promptly, or a lot of stupid mistakes would be made. With the deftness of long habits he seized the first opportunity of taking up the parable against himself.

"Oh yes, Eminenza," he said very earnestly, "we are all — except your illustrious self, of course — dreadful sinners in that way — egoists of the most evil kind. The Eminenza will pray for me, and I will humbly try to correct the fault in future. Mean-



while my heart is anxious about the Signor Professore. The young gentleman who so nobly rescued him may require my presence —”

“Go, go, my son,” exclaimed the Cardinal, “let Signor Bianchi want for nothing. It will be an eternal remorse to me that this terrible accident should have happened in my house, and we cannot do enough to repair our fault. Meanwhile please ask that young man to come to me here that I may thank him for his most valuable help. God was truly merciful to send him to us. I shall not know how to express my gratitude.”

Domenico departed, and in a few minutes the chaplain came to say that Signor Goffi (he had ascertained his name) had asked permission to withdraw at once, being very wet and not in a proper condition to present himself before the Eminenza. If he might be allowed, he would come and pay his respects to-morrow. And the doctor, who had now arrived, entreated the Cardinal not to visit the Signor Professore this evening. He must be kept very quiet, a sleeping draught, which should have a most beneficent effect, had been administered, and the doctor would remain through the night if necessary. He was confident that the patient would be much better in the morning. Let the Eminenza lay all anxiety aside and remember to take another dose of quinine himself at nine o'clock, also the orange-flower water in order to sleep peacefully after this deplorable shock to his nerves.



## CHAPTER XXII

WHEN night fell over the half-drowned city it seemed to Giannella that ten years of suspense and misery had been compressed into a single day. The few moments of wild happiness which had illuminated her sky during Rinaldo's visit had only made the creeping hours afterwards the more unbearable. As the weight of anxiety increased and no news came of either Rinaldo or Bianchi, Mariuccia's temper became almost savage; and Giannella, her hot Scandinavian blood roused at last, suddenly turned on her and told her that instead of cursing the flood, the city, and all connected with it she ought to be down on her knees praying for those who were in danger and asking pardon for her hard-heartedness in sending the bravest and kindest of men to look for a selfish old fellow who could be trusted to take the very best care of himself.

Mariuccia stopped short in her stride from window to window and stared at the girl in amazement. Giannella's eyes were blazing, her cheeks scarlet, her very hair, usually so goldenly smooth, was flying round her forehead in wild disorder. Her hands were clenched, and she brought her heel down on the bricks with a stamp which shook the rickety old floor.

"You have killed him, I know you have," she cried, all the torrent of her pent-up wretchedness finding



voice in the cry. "You old people are all alike, only caring for dried-up old creatures like yourselves. We — we, the young ones, who can think of something besides musty books and dirty old statues and scraped pennies — we who can love, and suffer for others, we are nothing. We may break our hearts and cry our eyes out, and consume with anguish, and nobody cares. 'Gioventú' — youth — you say, and shrug your shoulders, and forget all about it. Where is Rinaldo, my fidanzato, I should like to know? Oh, you need not look so shocked — he is my betrothed, and we will be married whether you or the padrone or fifty thousand other cruel old people want us to or not. Madonna mia, who is that?"

Across the torrent of her anger a long knocking had broken, and the cracked bell in the passage was jangling on its wires. Both the women changed color. It was the first sound that had come to them from the outer world since the morning, and it meant tidings. Good? Bad? Their hearts stood still. Mariuccia, the hardy old peasant, gave out the most completely, sinking down on a chair with both hands on her knees and the sweat breaking out on her brow. Giannella stood rigid by the table, staring towards the door. Then came a second knock, loud and sharp. She sprang to life and flew to answer it. As she tore at the chain and bolts, a word came through, the sweetest she had ever heard: "Giannella, is it you?"

Then the door was open, there was a stifled cry, and Giannella's head was buried on her lover's shoul-



der, his arms held her to his heart, his kisses were on her hair — Rinaldo had come back.

How they rejoiced over him! Mariuccia laid violent hands on the padrone's stores and cooked him a supper which he never forgot. He told them, in carefully mitigated form, of the poor Professor's adventure, dwelling much on the honor and comfort he was now enjoying and as little as possible on the painful incarceration which had preceded it. Mariuccia flushed with pride and delight when she learned that her master was the guest of the revered Cardinal Cestaldini, and Giannella listened with glowing eyes to the account of the rescue, telling herself over and over again that her Rinaldo was the most valiant of heroes for so cleverly and bravely going to the padrone's assistance. If Rinaldo's part in the exploit lost nothing in the telling it was only because the young man was too triumphantly happy to deprecate the applause which Giannella lavished upon him. When at last Mariuccia ordered him to bed in Bianchi's room — for she would not hear of his attempting to return to his own lodging that night — he fell asleep in a whirl of excitement, warmed, comforted, assured of the future, and indescribably happy to feel that his beautiful, loving Giannella was under the same roof with him, dreaming of him, somewhere on the other side of the dingy whitewashed wall.

He awoke the next morning dazed and puzzled at his surroundings and rather stiff and sore from the exposure and fatigues of the day before; but he had



scarcely opened his eyes when Mariuccia entered with a cup of steaming coffee, and his clothes, already carefully dried and pressed, folded over her arm. It was so long since he had had a woman to take care of him that his heart went out to her, and hers was always ready to mother another child. So he told her that she was an angel, and she said he was a good boy — and their compact for life was sealed.

When he came out into the kitchen a little later Giannella was giving the last touches to a truly Roman summer breakfast, delicate wafers of smoked ham on one plate, a pile of fresh figs, pale emerald globes, each carrying its dewdrop of honey at the tip, on another. An enterprising "fruttarolo" had wheeled his handcart up the Via Santafede at sunrise and the string and basket had done the rest. A few fresh carnations, pulled from the cherished window plants, stood in a glass with sprigs of lavender, and the repentant sunbeams played on a straw-bound flask of red wine and a carafe of sparkling Trevi water. The windows were open, the sky was blue; across the way Fra Tommaso's flowers were lifting their heads again in a fringe of white and red, and the pigeons were circling and calling to each other. The setting of the picture was all that was gay and sweet, but the picture itself was so enchanting that Rinaldo saw little else just then. Some rarer gold seemed to have been shed on Giannella's hair this morning, there was a new tenderness in her gray eyes, and her heart was so full of happiness that she smiled unconsciously, and at any chance word elusive



dimples of laughter showed themselves at the corners of her pretty mouth. The brightness of the day and the ease at her heart had made her unwilling to put on her old dark dress. She had found, among a few things of her mother's which Mariuccia had kept for her, a faded muslin, white sprigged with pink, and this she had shaken out and put on, pinning a flower where the open neck sank away from her fair throat, and a ribbon round the long old-fashioned waist. Mariuccia understood, and nodded approvingly when Giannella came out of her little room looking like a rose in bloom; and Rinaldo, when he joined them, understood too, and took her hands in his and whispered, "Good-morning, sposina mia."

The storm was over and the sun had begun to shine on Rome again, and on Giannella's life at last; and though happiness was such a new thing to her, she knew it for what it was and took it to her heart in all simplicity, in perfect trust that it would never fail her again.

When Rinaldo was lighting his first cigarette Mariuccia announced that, come what might, she was going to see for herself how the padrone was getting on. She was sure he must need her after all he had gone through — and he only just getting over that dreadful cold, poverino — and of course there was nobody in the Cardinal's household who could replace her at his bedside. What good were a lot of men to a sick person, she would like to know?

Rinaldo did not say that he was doubtful of her reception in the strictly celibate domicile, but he pro-



tested that no woman could get through the streets. The water had already subsided considerably, but it still lay deep in some places while others were an expanse of mud and slush not to be braved by petticoats. All this moved Mariuccia not at all; she had made up her obstinate old mind, and all Rinaldo obtained was that she would wait another hour or two. Then he would try to pilot her to the Via Tresette, from which one could gain the narrow alley leading to the back entrance of Palazzo Cestaldini, a facility which had only been revealed to himself the night before. In spite of his assurances that the doctor would certainly not allow the Professor to be moved for two or three days, Mariuccia insisted on preparing her master's bedroom for his reception. A huge warming-pan was placed in his bed, the window was tightly closed, and sundry acrid-smelling herbs were set on the fire for a "decotto" according to an ancient country prescription quite infallible against the results of a chill.

While she came and went, Rinaldo and Giannella sat and talked in low tones. All their future lay before them to play with and every detail of it was an enchanting subject to plan and think for. Now that he was so near her Rinaldo felt that it would be absurd to wait till October to be married, five whole weeks. No, that joyful event should take place as soon as the appartamento could be furnished, and Giannella must come with him and choose every single thing. What sort of paper would she like in the salotto — amber color, or mazarin blue with gold flowers? (Both were much admired, he heard.) As



for the bedroom, Rinaldo had seen that of a newly-married friend, and the walls were covered with pink roses as big as cabbages tied with blue ribbon. Oh, it was most beautiful, and so gay. Giannella would be sure to like it, and the roses would make it seem like summer all the year round.

The roses flushed up in Giannella's cheeks just then; she became silent, and finally dropped her eyes before Rinaldo's steady ardent gaze. "What is it, my angel?" he asked, leaning forward anxiously. "Does it not make you happy to know that you will so soon, in a few days, core of my heart — be my own little wife?"

"Too happy — I am too happy," she replied. "It almost hurts. Give me time, amore mio — a girl must take breath."

"Plenty of time to do that between now and next Sunday!" he declared. "Five whole days. Is that not enough? I wish it could be to-morrow, to-day."

"Five days," cried Giannella. "But, Rinaldo, we could not be ready for weeks. Think of all there is to do. Papering, furnishing, the linen to get and sew — oh, it is dreadful that you should have all this great expense, that I cannot do even a little to help in it. If they had only let me earn money during these years. It is terrible to feel that I have been so useless."

"Giannella mia," said Rinaldo, looking very wise, "I will tell you a secret. I do not believe I should ever have fallen in love with a woman who was earning her living. It takes something away — something



very light, very delicate — I am too stupid to explain it properly — but just what makes a woman adorable. It would break my heart if one of my sisters should think of doing such a thing. What are the men there for? We are very simple people, I and my family, but we are too proud for that. If we cannot keep our women in decency and comfort, we might as well throw ourselves into the river at once.”

“But I had no family,” said Giannella; “but for Mariuccia, and the padrone who let me stay here with her, I should have been brought up to a trade, like other poor girls.”

Rinaldo interrupted her with something like sternness. “Giannella, once for all, please forget all that. Thank Heaven Mariuccia understood her responsibilities and carried them out nobly. We will make it all up to her. And Signor Bianchi is not and has never been your ‘padrone.’ Please stop speaking of him in that manner. Your father was a gentleman and you belong to his class. The word ‘padrone’ offends me.”

“I would never do that,” she cried, “forgive me, my heart. It is just a habit that I have grown up with, because Mariuccia always speaks of the Professor like that. But I too must tell you something. We cannot — be married — quite so soon as you wish, because I am still determined that those two, Signor Bianchi and the Princess, must be quite reconciled and willing. Oh, you do not know how much I love you — it would kill me to be parted from you. But when I come to our dear, pretty appartamento



I must leave peace behind me. Then I can bring peace with me. Disturbances, contradictions, there must be none of these to remember on that day. Signor Bianchi must be our good friend always. He will be much happier like that, and will soon forget that he ever had this silly caprice about wanting to marry me. And the Principessa has been good to me. But for her, *amore mio*, I should be an ignorant, untaught creature, quite unfit to be your wife. So you owe her some gratitude, and I a great deal. When you see her and explain everything she will be sure to agree with you — who could help it? And it is not long to wait. She will return in the beginning of October.”

“And take another six weeks to find time to see me — and six more to make up her mind,” was Rinaldo’s scornful reply. “You are quite right, Giannella, we certainly ought to have her most excellent blessing, but I shall go to Santafede to get it. I do not mind that, my dear. I would travel round the world to please you. As for Bianchi — I am going to ask the Cardinal to bring him to reason as soon as the old fellow is able to listen to it. Your gentle heart shall be satisfied, and then —”

“Then,” said Giannella, suddenly bending over and laying her fresh lips on his hand, “then there will not be one little cloud in my whole world. You will have to pretend to be cross with me sometimes, to keep me from dying of happiness.”

Mariuccia came and stood beside them, her hands on her hips and a funny grimace in her old face.



“When you have done chattering, you two,” she said, “perhaps you will condescend to remember that we must go out. I am not in love — and I want to get my padrone into his own bed. It is nearly twelve o’clock.” And she smiled down on them benevolently.

Giannella ran off to change her dress, and soon returned, a bit of lovely primness in her black frock, with the lace coif over her smooth hair. The house was locked up and they all went down together. By picking their steps carefully they reached their destination without patent disaster, and were received by Domenico — Rinaldo warmly, but the women with the reserve proper to an ecclesiastical household, where such visitors came but rarely and were not encouraged. Leaving them all in the second anteroom the major-domo went to inform his master of their arrival.

“Eminenza, I grieve to disturb you” — this was the invariable opening of Domenico’s communications — “but that young gentleman, Signor Goffi, is in the sala, with two females who wish to see Signor Bianchi. And Signor Goffi — he seems most respectable and polite — begs the great favor of a few minutes’ audience. I told him that I would ask, but that of course — at this hour —”

“But yes, of course I will see hm,” the Cardinal exclaimed. “Have I not to thank him for averting the most terrible of disasters? Who are the women?” he inquired, with instinctive suspicion of anything in petticoats.



“An old servant and a young lady — rather pretty,” Domenico responded. “They say they live with the Signor Professore, and are anxious about his health.”

“Tell them to wait a minute,” said his master. “Bring Signor Goffi to me, and then go and see if the Professor is well enough to be troubled with these persons. And one thing more, Domenico. You say that the water has subsided in the streets — send a man at once to Signor De Sanctis, and ask him to favor me with a visit as soon as he conveniently can. I am anxious to hear his explanation of his unusual conduct yesterday.”

Out in the sala the two women were conversing in whispers, a little overawed by the stillness and the majesty of their surroundings, though Mariuccia took on a certain air of proprietorship and looked quite scornfully at the lacqueys in the outer room, mere hired servants who could boast no connection with the finest family on earth. She, Mariuccia Botti, belonged to the Cestaldini, and had a right to feel at home in the palace which, she informed Giannella, was not nearly so grand as the one at Castel Gandolfo.

Rinaldo meanwhile was elaborating the idea with which Giannella's remonstrances had inspired him. Personally he did not care a fig what Bianchi might think or feel about their marriage, but since she wished him to smile on it, smile he must, and fortune was putting into Rinaldo's hands the very best means of accomplishing that miracle. The Professor,



still shuddering under the impression of yesterday's horrible fright, should be brought to open his heart to his gallant rescuer (why throw away the benefit of a good action?) and the Cardinal, the great holy Cardinal, who could preach so eloquently that he could cause the most hardened sinners to be dissolved with contrition, he should use his authority and persuasion to effect this happy result. Now he must think of how best to lay his case before the prelate, and as he sat in the sala, staring at the high armored canopy which indicated that this was a princely house, he pondered whether to begin his appeal in a strain of noble, reckless passion such, as would touch an ordinary man of the world, or, more appropriately, in one of gentle humility. The latter seemed more advisable on the whole, and he began to rehearse an opening declaration of modesty and single-heartedness — in all of which, despite his sense of dramatic fitness, the good fellow would have claimed no more than his due, when Giannella turned to him with a little remark. He looked into her sweet, intelligent face and all apprehension left him. He felt that he had but to remember it and the right words would be given to him. Oh, that he could show her to the great man whose interest he wished to arouse. There would be small need for his own pleading after that. Who would not be glad to serve her?

Then Domenico appeared, to conduct Rinaldo to the Cardinal. He told the women that the doctor was with the Signor Professore; would they wait a little and he would find out whether they could see him afterwards?



## CHAPTER XXIII

**W**HEN Domenico inquired whether the Professor's servant might come in to see her master, the physician shook his head. "Better not," he said, "the patient is very weak and nervous still, and has fever. I cannot say whether it will abate at once. It is possible he may need great care for several days. And you know what these good females are, Sor Domenico. They weep, they wring their hands, they suggest sending for the priest, and frighten the poor creature into believing he is about to expire. Also they have ancient and noxious remedies used by their great-grandmothers for sore fingers, which they will administer to typhoid cases on the sly — and throw the doctor's medicines out of the window. I have known them give a fever patient a plate of beans because he happened to fancy it! No, the Signor Professore is better without any visitors at present. Tell these women that he is improving rapidly, that he is asleep — say that I have ordered him to have two pounds of beefsteak for his dinner. They will believe anything and that will reassure them. But mind you give him nothing but the soup, and the orzata if he is thirsty. I will return this evening."

Domenico nodded comprehendingly, showed the doctor out and, when the door had closed on him, gave Mariuccia his report with a little added color and em-



broidery to make it more convincing. The old woman listened eagerly, and, on receiving a rather rash promise that she should see her master the next day, declared herself satisfied, but asked leave to wait until the Signorino Goffi should be dismissed by his Eminence. She had the signorina with her — Domenico bowed perplexedly to Giannella, whose status was by no means clear to him — and the streets were in a dreadful condition still, Mariuccia explained, not fit for two women alone to traverse. Domenico, all politeness, begged them to be seated, and assured them that the Signorino Goffi would rejoin them shortly; he was about to retire when another visitor entered, the lawyer De Sanctis, looking troubled and out of breath. The messenger had told him the story of the Professor's adventure and had (after the manner of Italian servants, who consider themselves and are considered a part of the family) given him a friendly warning that the Eminenza was "*proprio inchieto*," very much annoyed by what had happened, and would in all likelihood administer some severe reproof to the Signor Avvocato. Sor Domenico had received a terrific scolding, and it was understood in the house that but for the intercession of Don Ignazio, the Eminenza's chaplain, he and the porter and one or two others would have been dismissed on the spot. The kind-hearted fellow suggested two or three good lies as possible excuses, but De Sanctis knew that these would not pass with his clear-sighted patron. He must take his scolding as best he might — and revenge himself



for it some day by discrediting Bianchi with the Cardinal. That would be easy enough, as things stood.

He was being conducted through the sala to await his turn elsewhere, when he caught sight of Giannella. He halted, looked again at her and her companion, and whispered to Domenico that he had a word to say to the young lady; there was no need to wait for him; he would be in the room beyond when the Eminenza should condescend to send for him. And Domenico, glad to be dismissed, hurried off to attend to his many duties.

Then De Sanctis came towards Giannella with a pleasant smile of recognition. "Signorina Brockmann," he said, "I fear you do not remember me," for Giannella was meeting his glance with some surprise, "yet it was I who had the pleasure of bringing you the news of your accession to fortune some little time ago. How easily we become accustomed to agreeable things! You have perhaps forgotten that you were not always rich."

Giannella had risen from her seat when he began to speak, but her face was grave and cold. There was a touch of familiarity in his tone which offended her. As he continued, however, her expression changed to one of blank incomprehension. It was patent to De Sanctis that Bianchi had never told her about her inheritance. The shabby dress, the running out on mean errands, the discrepancies which had puzzled him, were explained now. He had not had long to wait for his pretty little revenge. Here was a



weapon with which to turn the Cardinal's just wrath in quite a new direction. He smiled on the girl gratefully for providing him with it.

"I remember you perfectly, sir," Giannella said at last, "but I do not understand to what you allude. There is a mistake. You must be thinking of some other person."

Neither of them had noticed Mariuccia, who, through the colloquy, had been staring at the lawyer with an ominous frown. She remembered him, she recognized him, the visitor to whom she had wished twenty thousand apoplexies in the last three months.

Pushing Giannella aside she came before him, her eyes like fiery gimlets boring for the truth — a rough-tongued, hard-handed Nemesis prepared to chastise the disturber of household peace. "Ah, it is you!" she began in a scornful growl, "Now perhaps you will tell me what wickedness it was that you put into my poor padrone's head when you came to see him? Till that day he was an angel, good, pacific, regulated, thinking only of his studies, his blessed archæology and his bits of stones, asking only that his house should be quiet and his meals punctual and cheap. Never did he require more of us two poor creatures than that — and as for matrimony — he would have run away if anybody had had the temerity to speak to him of such folly. What should he want with a wife at fifty-five, when he never wanted one at the proper time? You come, Master Lawyer, and a thousand caprices come with you and make an earthquake in his poor head! This child and I have had no rest! He



wants to marry the poor little thing, *marry* her, with the clothes she stands up in, a girl without a penny, who already works for him without wages, as if she were my daughter and not a lady born. Did you tell him, O assassin, that she is big enough and strong enough to do the work of two? Does he want to send me away after twenty years' service, to save my miserable wages — all that she and I have in the world — and make her his wife so that she will have to work for him, gratis, forever? Ah, that was it, was it? You said to him, 'Sor Professore mio, why feed two females and pay one when you need only feed one and pay her nothing? That old strega, Mariuccia, will soon be aged and of little use. Giannella knows how to do everything now. Marry her, so that she can live alone with you, and get rid of the other at once.' Yes, that is what you advised, infidel, imprudent," thundered the enraged seeress, "and you have committed a damnable sin, for which the devil who taught it to you shall kick your soul and the souls of all your ugly little dead about in hell for a thousand years! Madonna mia, how could such wickedness enter a man's heart?"

During this long impassioned address De Sanctis had stood quite still, never taking his eyes from his adversary's face till she stopped, gasping for breath, with clenched hands that seemed twitching to get at his throat. Giannella was clinging to her arm and had been keeping up a stream of remonstrances and entreaties that she would cease to insult the gentleman, would refrain from making such a scandalous uproar



in the Cardinal's house. But all to no purpose. Mariuccia shook her off as a wolfhound would shake off a spaniel, and only paused, as it seemed, to find breath and inspiration for another tirade.

De Sanctis had allowed her to say her say, for every word she uttered only made the Professor's perfidy more plain; now his legal integrity was sitting in judgment on the offender, while his personal grudge against the man fed joyfully on the proofs of his double dealing. Having learned all that he wished to know, he spoke to Mariuccia, angrily enough. "You are a silly, ignorant woman, and you have been saying things for which you will beg my pardon on your knees! You think you know what I came to say to your master, do you? Well, listen, and never again, so long as you live, dare to insult an honorable and innocent person with vile suspicions. Yes, I thought the Professor was like myself, an upright man, a man to be trusted. I thought he had been the lifelong friend and helper of this young lady. And, as she was still under age, I placed in his hands the wonderful fortune which, largely through my disinterested efforts in discovering her, had come to her from her father's brother in Denmark. Ah, you tremble, you turn pale. Yes, that was what I came to tell Signor Bianchi — and the brigand has never informed her of it — that Giannella Brockmann had become a rich girl with an income of two thousand scudi, left her by her uncle, two thousand big silver scudi every year, all for herself; that she is no longer obliged to live



on charity, but is now a young lady with a dowry that will ensure her a good husband and a comfortable establishment whenever she chooses. I came as the bearer of this beautiful news — and you insult me as if I were an executioner!”

The last part of this speech was lost on his audience. Mariuccia had sunk back on a chair, her face gray with emotion, and Giannella was kneeling beside her, covering her gnarled hands with kisses and crying through a rain of happy tears, “Mariuccia, do you understand? I am rich, rich, and now I can repay you for all your goodness to me. You shall have clothes, shoes, meat, old wine — a new bed for your poor tired body, with soft blankets — two thousand scudi — every year, for always? Oh, you shall have a gold chain as thick as my finger and earrings with pearls as big as figs. Oh, what have I done that such happiness should come to me, Madonna mia Santissima — I shall die of joy.”

Not a thought for herself, nor even for Rinaldo; not a glimmer of resentment against Bianchi; only the passion of gratitude nearly breaking her heart because it could be satisfied at last.

Mariuccia bent down and kissed the golden head. Then she took the girl's face in her two hands and looked into it long and silently, a light on her own that had never shone there before. She tried to speak, but could not; only, two slow tears trickled down her cheeks. Giannella put up her soft fingers and brushed them away.



"The very last you shall ever shed, Mariuccia mia," she murmured; "we know, we two, what it has been. Domine Dio, it is all over!"

Then the old woman rose to her feet and flung up her arms with a magnificent gesture of thanksgiving, like a prophetess beholding the victories of justice, the justifications of her God. "After twenty years you have heard me, Mother of Mercy!" she cried, "Protector of the fatherless, Consoler of the afflicted, blessed be your most sweet Name for ever and ever!"

De Sanctis turned away and walked to a farther window, where he stood looking out and seeing nothing. His little fabric of false values had tumbled to pieces. His shallow appreciations of human nature had scaled off like a rotten shroud from a re-risen body. His own astuteness, of which he had been so proud, Bianchi's dishonest avarice, the low aims and rabid egoism with which he credited mankind at large — these were not the spirit level by which to measure real men and women. That was set by honest hearts incapable of selfish grief or sordid joy, by Goffi, the obscure little artist, entreating his aid to obtain a penniless bride, by the girl over there, pure of worldly taint, by the ignorant old woman who had threatened him and his dead with hell. He had looked deep into the hearts of all three, and had seen into gold and crystal. Being only a prosaic Roman he did not put it so poetically. "Good folk, good kind folk," he told himself. "Beati loro! They are the happy ones. I wonder if there are many more of them in the world?"



When he looked round again he found that he was alone. No flooded streets, no hesitations of timidity, could weigh with those two rejoicing women. They were hastening to San Severino to give thanks where thanks were due.



## CHAPTER XXIV

**I**N the Cardinal's study Rinaldo, sitting on the very edge of a chair with his hat on his knees, was looking eagerly into the benevolent face of the prelate. The latter was expressing his thanks in the exquisite Italian of the Roman noble; his hand, with his big amethyst ring, fingered a malachite paper weight on the writing-table; his fine head, crowned with the red berretta, reposed against the crimson damask of his chair, for he was still languid from his recent indisposition. Rinaldo was really thinking less of what the Cardinal said than of the delightful picture he made — so different from the forlorn lay figure stuck into the property chair and draped in the red tablecloth that the artist felt as if he ought to do penance for all the calumnies on cardinals that he had persuaded the dealers to buy from him. Oh, if this beautiful old gentleman would let him paint his portrait, here in the sober grandeur of his proper surroundings, with the long sunbeam falling across his ring and sending its reflection up into his eyes. Was it altogether out of the question? Oh, of course. He was not distinguished enough to venture to suggest such a thing. What was this that the Cardinal was saying?

“So you see, Signor Goffi, that I have reason to be profoundly grateful to you. But for your charity and courage my poor friend might have had to re-



main yet longer in that terrible situation, and it is doubtful whether he should have survived further exposure. And I had encouraged him to go down there! Never can I forgive myself my thoughtlessness and selfishness. I grieve to say that he is rather seriously indisposed, but the doctor thinks that with care he will soon recover. I pray that it may be so. And now, tell me, is there any way in which I can serve you? To me it would be the greatest of pleasures — and old people can sometimes be useful to young ones, you know.”

The charming urbanity of the tone, the courtesy which so delicately annihilated the distance between a great noble, a prince of the Church, and his unknown, middle-class self, touched Rinaldo deeply, and set his heart beating with hope as he considered how best to frame his request. The Cardinal saw that something was coming, and there was a gentle twinkle in his eyes as he looked at his visitor. The candid, handsome young face appealed to the inner spring of youth which life may seal but never dry up in certain pure warm hearts. Rinaldo felt the expressed goodwill as he might have become sensible of unexpected warmth in the light of a fixed star; it shed a pleasant radiance from very far away. Indeed they two could scarcely have been farther apart had they lived till now on separate planets. There was no merging of class and class in Rome, then. A prominent dignitary of the Church moved in his own sphere of half-mystic greatness, linked with all things sacred and regal. Except for a question of souls, he did not, in the ordinary



affairs of life (unless he happened to have risen from the ranks himself), take any personal cognizance of those outside his circle, ecclesiastical, political, and social. Paolo Cestaldini had never heard of this young man till the night before, and apart from the fact that he had nice manners, and evidently belonged to the educated "mezzo ceto" had not the slightest clue by which to judge of his circumstances.

"Well," he said encouragingly, "what is it, my son? I see that your heart has a desire. If it be possible for me, it would be my felicity to satisfy it."

"Oh, Eminenza," Rinaldo cried, "there is indeed something, if it would not give you too great trouble to confer the greatest of benefits upon me. Not as a recompense for the little service I was able to render last night — any man would have done the same — and my friend, Sacchetti, helped me — but if, out of the great goodness of your heart, you would speak a word to Professor Bianchi, and tell him how wrong —" Rinaldo paused, alarmed at the sudden sternness of the prelate's expression.

"And what is it that I am to tell the distinguished Professor?" All the encouragement was gone from the Cardinal's tone as he asked the question. That an unknown youth should suggest criticism, actual condemnation of anything in the conduct of a great light of science, his own revered friend, appeared to him as a monstrous piece of impertinence.

But Rinaldo, conscious of the justice of his cause, caught boldly at the receding opportunity. "Your



Eminence will pardon me when I explain what must sound so presumptuous," he said firmly. "The case is this: In the Professor's house there is a young girl whom I wish to marry. We love each other sincerely. She is good and beautiful, but very poor, an orphan whom the Professor's servant adopted and brought up. She helps the old woman to wait on him, and though her father was a gentleman and she has received a good education, she has for years past been contented to regard herself as Signor Bianchi's servant and to be so regarded by him. A short time ago he suddenly declared that he wished to marry her —"

"Marry her?" the Cardinal exclaimed, sitting up straight in his chair. "The Professor wanted to marry — a young girl? His servant? But what are you telling me, Signor Goffi? Are you sure?"

"Quite sure, Eminenza, strange as it may seem," Rinaldo replied. "Giannella had no wish to marry him — the poor child shrank with horror from the idea, and Mariuccia — that is the old woman — would not hear of it. But he persisted, and at last induced the most excellent Princess Santafede to interest herself on his behalf. Perhaps your Eminence does not know that her Excellency had the great kindness to send Giannella to the convent, where she received a beautiful education?"

The Cardinal bent his head. "I remember hearing something of it," he said. Then he smiled involuntarily at the recollection of Fra Tommaso's im-



passioned appeal about a little girl and a poor woman from Castel Gandolfo. He had quite forgotten the circumstance till now.

“Well,” Rinaldo continued, “her gratitude to the Princess and the natural respect she felt for such a great and good lady made Giannella desirous of obeying her in all things possible, and when her Excellency told her that she should be only too thankful to find a disinterested and honorable protector like Signor Bianchi, and that it was clearly her duty to accept him — Giannella thought it might really be wrong to disobey.”

The Cardinal gave an amused little groan. He had often warned his sister that, like many pious ladies, she was too eager to pilot young women into respectable homes. She had found husbands for three girls during the past year; one had proved fairly satisfactory, but the others had not turned out well. One poor thing had run away, no one knew whither, because her husband maltreated her, and the other was now working like a galley slave to support an idle man. And now he learned that, undeterred by these failures, she was planning another matrimonial mistake! Really, Teresa must be more prudent.

Rinaldo went on after a short pause, “That was before Giannella and I quite understood each other, Eminenza. Now I do not think she would ever consent, but it will grieve us both to make an enemy of Signor Bianchi, and Giannella wishes to have the approval of her Excellency. I asked the avvocato De Sanctis to do something, since it was after a visit



from him that this strange caprice seemed to have taken possession of the Professor, but I have heard nothing more from him — and time passes and Giannella is in a very disagreeable situation in the Professor's house. Oh, Eminenza, I want so much to take my sposina to my own home and make her happy. I work hard, I have had good fortune of late — I can support her. Will you, of your great condescension, persuade Signor Bianchi that she is not for him, and make him acquiesce in our marriage — and also please obtain for us the consent of the Princess? Without that Giannella will not be content. We would bless you from our hearts and pray for you every time we went to Mass."

The Cardinal had looked very grave since the mention of De Sanctis. He recalled the pretty story of secret benevolence and ensuing good fortune which he had found so consoling to a Christian heart. He marshaled the facts in his mind and sorrowfully admitted to himself that they were not edifying. It would have been bad enough to learn that a distinguished, middle-aged man had lost his head about a pretty girl, a mere child in comparison with himself; but the Cardinal could have forgiven that. His long experience of human nature had taught him that no vagaries were too wild to become facts where the relations of man and woman were concerned. But there was something worse here, something so ugly that it pierced his heart with pain to recognize it for what it was — black mortal sin, covetousness, double dealing, an apparent intention to defraud a defenseless



girl of her liberty and her property, since the goods of the wife would pass absolutely into the keeping of the husband unless a pre-matrimonial contract were made to secure them to her. And the man who was apparently planning this cruelty had long been his own friend, his comrade in the delights of high intellectual pursuits. The thing was horrible. He shuddered and covered his eyes with his hand for a moment, praying for light on his own duty in the matter.

Rinaldo saw that his statement had gone home, and he did not venture to interrupt the prelate's train of thought. At last the latter raised his head, and his face looked sad and tired. His first duty at least was clear to him already. The young people must not learn of the poor sinner's fault if it were possible to keep it from them; he would repent in time — had perhaps repented already, by the grace of God, and the future must not be made harder for him by publicity and scandal.

"Figlio mio," he said very gently, "this is a strange story, and although I am sure you believe it yourself, I must know a little more before I can, with any propriety, venture to advise the Signor Professore on such delicate and private affairs. You are quite right in wishing to reconcile him, and also my sister, to your marriage. The Princess is in villeggiatura at present, but I will communicate with her. As for Signor De Sanctis, he is my man of business, and I am expecting him this morning. With your permission," here the fine old head bent towards Rinaldo with exquisite courtesy, "I will speak to him of this



matter, and I have little doubt that a harmonious settlement can be arrived at. You see, I am taking you on trust, my son. I hope that your intentions regarding this young girl are as upright as they appear; and also, if you will pardon an old man for speaking so frankly, that your own life is orderly and pious; that you practice our holy religion and keep away from bad companions. You must not be incensed at my suggesting such questions. Matrimony is a holy state, and many plunge into it all unprepared to fulfill its obligations."

"Eminenza," Rinaldo replied, "I thank you most sincerely for taking so much interest in my welfare, and I will answer your questions veraciously. As for my morals — well, I have been too poor to have any vices, and I was well brought up by good, kind parents, to whom I have not done sufficient honor, but whom I have tried not to grieve. I have worked hard, the masters at the Academy were satisfied with me, and I obtained the silver medal before I left. The president of the Boating Society will tell your Eminence that I never drink — except when I swallow too much of the Tiber. As to religion, I am afraid I have been forgetful sometimes. When I am very happy — or very unhappy — over a picture, I lose count of the days of the week and find myself on the church steps in my best clothes on Monday or Tuesday morning instead of Sunday. And oh, since I am telling your Eminence so much about myself, I must not forget a horrible crime that I have committed!" The Cardinal looked up anxiously. "I have circu-



lated the most shocking calumnies, again and again, for money." He laughed ruefully, and the prelate's face became a study of grief and reproach. "Yes, the Eminenza has a right to look horrified. I had no excuse except hunger — and ignorance. I have painted cardinals, at least twenty of them, from a crippled lay figure with one leg, dressed in an old tablecloth, Heaven forgive me — the foreigners who bought them had never beheld a cardinal, except perhaps in the street, and I never had the honor of speaking to one till this morning. But I perceive my errors. I repent, I will sin no more."

The prelate was laughing too now, and Rinaldo went on more earnestly. "As for the Sunday Mass, Giannella will not let me forget that when we are married. She goes every day. Oh, if the Eminenza could only see her. She is so good, so beautiful — like Raffælo's youngest Madonna, the 'Gran Duca.'"

"Then the contemplation of her must correct your faults, my son," the Cardinal said. "Bad art is a sin for which even the Grand Penitentiary has no absolution. Ah, what is it?"

The chaplain had entered and stood waiting to speak. He glanced at Rinaldo disapprovingly. The unknown young man had been granted an audience of unprecedented length, and it was Don Ignazio's business to see that his revered superior should be spared fatigue, and also that respectable visitors should not be kept waiting too long before being admitted.

"Eminenza," he said, "the avvocato De Sanctis has been here for some time. I thought you could per-



haps see him now? But I fear you are tired with so much talking already. I could ask him to call again."

Rinaldo had risen on the chaplain's entrance. "Your Eminence has been too kind," he protested. "I am ashamed of having trespassed so far on your goodness. I remove the inconvenience of my presence, with most humble thanks for all the Eminenza's condescension and kindness."

As he knelt to kiss the amethyst ring the Cardinal bent over to say in a low tone: "I will see what can be done, and will send for you in a day or two. Meanwhile, my son, we will observe silence on all this matter, and you must ask your fidanzata to do the same. I have good reasons."

"The Eminenza shall be obeyed," Rinaldo replied. As he was passing through the outer room, he encountered De Sanctis, who stopped to shake hands with him, saying, "I have been having a little conversation with the Signorina Brockmann and that old woman. Go to them, Signor Goffi, I am sure they want you. Incidentally I may say that you will find them prepared to answer all the questions with which you peppered me the other day. Diascoci, I think it is lucky for Bianchi that he is ill in bed, where you cannot get at him when you are satisfied as to the cause of his alarming dementia. Arrivederci. Yes, Don Ignazio, here I come." This to the chaplain, who was beckoning to him from a farther doorway.

The study was empty when De Sanctis was ushered into it and he sat down to wait for his patron. In ten minutes or so the latter returned. "I have been



to the Professor's room," the Cardinal explained when the first greetings were over. "I wished to see for myself how he was going on and to ascertain whether he would be equal to a little conversation to-day."

"I trust he is quite convalescent, Eminenza?" De Sanctis replied. "I am deeply sorry to learn of his accident. I had no idea—"

But the Cardinal held up his hand for silence, and the lawyer got his lecture in stern, unsparing words, to which he listened with becoming humility and an appearance of such true contrition that the prelate softened, relented, and finally took him back into grace.

Something had wrought a change in De Sanctis's mood. To his own surprise he found himself inclined to admit that his desertion of the absent-minded Professor the day before was rather a shabby action. In consequence he was regretfully but logically obliged to lay aside his intention of discrediting the other man in the Cardinal's estimation. His natural curiosity, however, was by no means subdued, and he longed to know why Goffi had remained an hour shut up with the prelate in his study, and what, besides a mere polite acknowledgment of the artist's timely help, could have furnished the matter of the interview. The Cardinal himself led the conversation in the desired direction.

"Signor Goffi has just left me," he said, "and he told me that he called upon you the other day, Guglielmo. Since he spoke frankly about the object of his visit, I hope you will not consider me indiscreet if I ask you to do the same. He related a rather strange



story. Should you feel justified in telling me what you know about it?"

"I think so, Eminenza," De Sanctis replied; "the Signorina Brockmann is the person chiefly concerned, and she seems to be in need of help and advice, which have failed her where she had a right to expect them. I am betraying no confidence in telling your Eminence that she has only this moment, and in this house, learned of her inheritance. For some unexplained reason Professor Bianchi has abstained from informing her of it."

"Why did you not tell her yourself, at the time?" the Cardinal inquired.

"The Professor was unwilling that I should speak to her on the subject," said the lawyer. "He described her as rather a hysterical girl. He feared the sudden excitement might be too much for her nerves, and preferred to communicate the good news gently and in private."

The Cardinal was silent for a moment. Then he asked, "Are you sure that she was not told anything? What led you to speak to her about it now?"

Then De Sanctis told him of his own slowly-awakened suspicions, of Rinaldo's appeal and evident ignorance of the facts, which Giannella would certainly have confided to him had she been in possession of them, and finally he described Mariuccia's recent attack on him and Giannella's intense emotion when she learned what had first brought him to Professor Bianchi's house. All showed conclusively that Bianchi had kept the matter to himself, together with the cash



for which the girl had signed a receipt in the lawyer's presence.

When he had ended, the Cardinal asked one question more. "Is it true that Bianchi is trying to marry the girl?"

"So Mariuccia and Goffi affirm," replied the other. And for the life of him he could not help adding, "He appears very anxious to do so at once. This is August — and she will be of age on the eighth of September."

"Her money would become her husband's in any case, would it not?" the Cardinal inquired.

"It could be secured to her in the marriage contract if her friends so wished," was the reply. "The usual proceeding is to set apart a certain portion of the dowry for the wife's own use, while the remainder comes under the jurisdiction of the husband, to be applied to family expenses in common."

"I know," said the Cardinal. "But if no agreement to this effect were made before marriage, all monies she then possessed, knowingly or unknowingly, would pass unconditionally to her husband?" The tone implied a desire to have the statement contradicted.

"They would pass unconditionally to her husband," De Sanctis repeated. Then he began to study the pattern of the carpet, for the Cardinal was leaning his head on his hand and evidently thinking deeply. At last he looked up, saying, "In speaking to the girl did you comment on the Professor's silence?"



“I touched on it, Eminenza, but she appeared to take no notice, and nothing more was said on that subject.”

“That is well,” said the Cardinal; “and now, my son, since we are on the question of marriages, what do you think of that young Goffi? He struck me as an amiable, honest fellow. Would he make a good husband for this poor child? Do you know anything about him?”

“I too was pleased with him, Eminenza,” replied De Sanctis heartily, “and I took the trouble to make inquiries. He has an excellent record, and a small property of his own. Giannella could not do better than marry him.”

“And Giannella herself — is she all he thinks her?” The Cardinal put the question with a doubtful smile. “These little females are sadly deceptive sometimes, *Guglielmo mio*.” The speaker sighed over the general shortcomings of Eve’s degenerate daughters.

But the lawyer replied with an earnestness which was most unusual for him, “I believe she is really as good as she is pretty, Eminenza, and one cannot say more than that. Only her scruples have caused her and Goffi some unhappiness. The *eccellentissima Principessa*, who knew nothing of the other suitor, having told her that she ought to marry Bianchi, she imagined it might be criminal to disobey. She has a good heart. Just now, when she learned from me that she possessed this little fortune, what do you suppose was her first thought? To reward that cross



old woman for taking care of her. She nearly went mad with joy when she found she could do that. Oh, she will make a good wife, that girl."

"I am rejoiced to hear it," said the Cardinal; "as I have told you before, Guglielmo, you should find such another for yourself. To live alone is not good for a young man in the world. It either exposes him to temptation — or else it hardens his heart. I have sometimes feared, my son, that it might be having the latter effect upon you. I should rejoice to know that you were happily married."

"Eminenza," replied De Sanctis, smiling, "I perceive that matchmaking runs in your illustrious family. I will remember your warning, and try to find time to fall in love. Meanwhile, in order to avoid any hardening of heart, shall I do what I can to arrange the affairs of these devoted young people? Signor Bianchi being unable at this moment to offer obstruction —"

"Gently, gently," the Cardinal interrupted. "We must not overlook him altogether, that would be discourteous. And he should have an opportunity of explaining himself. Perhaps he was only planning a pleasant surprise for his young friend on her birthday?"

"Or on the day she was to become his wife?" suggested De Sanctis sarcastically. "Oh, Eminenza, the casuistries of your charity are as unscrupulous as any of those we poor disciples of the law are accused of."

The Cardinal smiled half apologetically as he replied, "Charity is rather an abnormal creature, my



dear Guglielmo. She often has to close her eyes to find her way. When she opens them again she generally beholds that which she desired to see. So for the present we will stand aside and keep silence as to our opinion of our neighbor's conduct — and Charity perhaps will whisper something in his ear. Then when she beckons to us to approach and reckon with him we may find — that we were mistaken all along, that his intentions were neither dishonest nor unkind, but only a little unwise. That will give us all great pleasure, will it not?"

"I am conquered," declared De Sanctis. "Anything that gives you pleasure, Eminenza, will certainly do so to me. You are the best argument for Christianity that I ever met. Let me know, I pray, when the marriage contract is required. It will be interesting to draw it up — and to make the kind, candid Professor Bianchi witness it."

"Go away. You are incorrigible," laughed the Cardinal. And the lawyer bowed himself out.



## CHAPTER XXV

**R**INALDO learned from the servant in the hall that the women had left the palazzo in haste, saying something about going to San Severino. So he hurried thither by the tortuous side ways whence the water was already draining rapidly. Meanwhile Mariuccia was standing in the archway leading to the chapel of the Bona Mors, in excited colloquy with Fra Tommaso. When the old sacristan understood the facts his face beamed with satisfaction. Mariuccia's was not less radiant, though it showed that she was still deeply impressed by the recent revelations. To her the whole thing was a two-fold wonder — her Giannella's good fortune, and a visible answer to her many prayers; also the vindication of her sorely-tried belief in the rich relations "over there" whom she had materialized for Giannella so many years ago out of her own sense of the fitness of things. "Oh, Fra Tommaso mio," she cried, "how I thank you for your good prayers. Surely you have obtained this great happiness for me that Giannella does not go to her husband's people like a beggar! My brother's daughters, even, brought enough to be well received by their mothers-in-law — to be able to hold up their heads on Sundays with the rest, and she, poor little thing, she was to be married 'cola camicia,' without a sheet or a towel, or a pair of earrings! No, the



Madonna knew that it would break my heart. She has spared me this shame. Giannella can show cupboards full of linen when the rich mamma from Orbetello comes to poke her nose about in the young people's house; she can make presents to the sisters of her husband, we can send the confetti in beautiful gilt boxes! Quick, give me two of your biggest candles. I have the money here for them — and light them for me on the altar of the Addolorata.”

Fra Tommaso spread out his hands in deprecation. “Never mind about paying for these candles, com-mara. I will gladly make you a present of them, for I rejoice in your felicity. Did I not always tell you that all would happen as you wished? The Biondina has grown up an angel — the relations were there all the time, they have proved rich, and have died in good dispositions, for all of which virtues may God reward them and rest their souls. And here is the good, handsome young man whom you had figured to yourself for Giannella's husband! Signorino, my most respectful felicitations and good wishes to you and the young lady.” This last to Rinaldo, who at that moment arrived upon the scene. He had caught a few words of the rhapsody, but they conveyed little to him. Old people like Fra Tommaso could not speak without certain extravagances of voice and gesture; they only meant that he was feeling well and that his heart was even fuller than usual of sympathy with his kind. Mariuccia had apparently announced the intended marriage, and the good wishes of course referred to that. “I thank you, Fra Tommaso,” he



answered, smiling at the sacristan's enthusiasm. "I am very much to be congratulated, and I am flattered to know that you think my betrothed is in the same good case. I hope you will soon ring the bells for a fine wedding Mass. But," he turned to Mariuccia, "where is Giannella? And why did you two run away so suddenly? I was just coming to see you safely home."

"Go and ask Giannella," Mariuccia replied triumphantly. "Let her tell you what sent us here in such a hurry. We did not get so very wet either." She turned up her foot to take a look at the sole of her boot. "She is in the chapel inside there, the usual place."

Rinaldo found Giannella kneeling as she had knelt on that first morning, her face hidden in her hands, the white rosary slipping through her fingers. He stood beside her, and this time she raised her head and looked up into his face. Her own was very calm and radiant. She slid her hand into his and motioned to him to kneel beside her.

"God has been good to us," she whispered. "Finish the rosary with me, and then I will tell you what has happened."

An hour or two later the three were sitting at the round table in the Professor's dining-room. Mariuccia had hastily got together a simple feast, and the board was decorated by a great bunch of flowers pressed upon her by Fra Tommaso, who had snipped off many a cherished carnation and oleander blossom to send a "bel bocché" to the Biondina.



Rinaldo had been told the story and was frankly delighted. "Not for myself," he protested; "as for me, I am indifferentissimo about riches. I had satisfied myself that Giannella could never want for anything, not even for the drive on Sundays, the theater once a fortnight, and the three week's villeggiatura in September, all of which are a wife's due. All this I could have provided easily, and I give you my word as a galantuomo that neither my family nor my friends should ever have known that Giannella had no dowry. The linen we would have bought little by little, and she should have embroidered it all in her maiden name as is proper; so that when everything was ready, and we ask my good mamma and the girls to come and see us, they would have beheld that they must treat her with all respect. They are disinterested; yes, we have never disquieted ourselves about money in my family, but certain things are expected, as you know, and I should not have wished them to be wanting. Nevertheless, this good fortune will bring a great increase of happiness. Giannella can have many more pleasures, and there will never be any anxieties. I shall continue to work perseveringly — we will live in peace and much comfort; and all the money we do not spend we will put aside for the education of our sons and the doweries of our daughters. Mariuccia must live with us and grow fat — better late than never, Sora Mariuccia mia! And we shall be the happiest family in Rome!"

"And we will have the padrone — I mean the Signor Professore, to dinner every Sunday," said



Giannella, who had been listening breathlessly to Rinaldo's description of the enchanting future; "poor man, he will be so lonely without us two women."

Rinaldo made a wry face. "I think I could do without the Signor Professore," he ventured to say. "Without rancor, I must confess that the part he has played in all this is most inexplicable, if he is at all an honest man, which (Mariuccia, you must forgive me) I sadly doubt. In fact I suspect —"

But Giannella laid her fingers on his lips. "You suspect nothing, Rinaldo mio. Are you rude enough to say that I am so ugly and so stupid that he could not fall in love with me — properly in love? Can you doubt that his affection prompted him to arrange a charming little surprise for me when I should come of age? Incredulous one, that is the evident truth, and to controvert known truth is mortal sin."

"It requires a robust act of faith to accept your definition, my angel," said Rinaldo, "but I suppose I must. Behold a new dogma! Signor Carlo Bianchi is a disinterested old fellow with a singularly susceptible heart. Fiat! Rome — that is to say, Giannella has spoken. Doubt becomes transgression. I doubt no more."

"Amen," came in Mariuccia's deepest tones from across the table, where she has paused in splitting a fresh fig to listen frowningly to Rinaldo's arraignment of the padrone's conduct. Now she smiled contentedly at her two light-hearted children, finished her fig to the last drop of honey, and dipped her fingers in the glass water bowl which is never wanting on



the poorest Roman table. "Come, bambini," she said, "we will drink his health. May my poor little padroncino recover immediately and come back to his own home."

The three glasses were raised whole-heartedly; when they were set down, it was evident that Charity had once more closed her eyes to find her way.

As the day wore to its close, the half-drowned city seemed to raise its head and, turning from the muddy deposits at its feet, to look up at the clear new blue of the sky with deep thankfulness that the long, depressing scirocco was over; that, although September was still to come, the heat of the summer was broken and the ever-desired autumn near at hand. A fresh breeze, with a touch of tramontana in it, was blowing down over Soracte and the Cimmerian hills, and fretted with crisp wavelets the stretches of yellow water which still trespassed on Ripetta and the neighboring streets. On roof-garden and window-ledge little lemon-trees and verbena bushes spread green arms to the tempered sunshine, to the cool wind; swallows sailed joyously in ever-rising circles, their white breasts flashing like silver shields as they turned to the low sun, their shrill cries filling the air with sharp, clear sound. Far away, behind Saint Peter's, the sky was streaked into long level bars of gold and rose and crysophrase, bars where feathery cloudlets caught and hung like notes of floating flame—the score of some symphony played by the seraphs very far away.



The sunset light shone softly into the windows of a bedroom in Palazzo Cestaldini, and illuminated two faces, that of a sick sinner and his friend. The Professor looked more gaunt and pale than ever sitting up against his pillows in the spotless, ascetic little room. The doctor had confided to the chaplain that the sick man appeared to have something on his mind — could the Eminenza perhaps exercise the kind condescension of paying him a visit? The Eminenza who had only been waiting for the medico's permission, glided in a few moments later, dismissed his attendant, and drew a chair to the bedside.

Bianchi, sufficiently recovered to be grateful for this honor, began to express his regret for having caused so much trouble in the illustrious household, but the Cardinal forbade him to waste his strength in unnecessary words, and in the most natural way made it appear that all the honor and all the regrets were his. The Professor was to understand that the master of the house and everyone else connected with the recent events would never cease to reproach themselves for their part in the catastrophe, and all that the Cardinal personally desired was an opportunity to make some reparation. Was there not something he could do for his good friend, some matter of business, great or small, which might suffer by delay, and which the Professor could comfort his host's heart by permitting him to attend to for him? In a life all devoted to study, little things were apt to escape one, as he knew too well by personal experience; he himself, he declared, was the most forgetful of men,



and during his recent indisposition, when he was lying awake with fever, several neglected details had come back to him with painful but wholesome persistence. He said that he had thus been led to make up his mind to clear them off once for all; indeed to put all his personal affairs into such good order and safe hands, that, if a real illness came, and Heaven pleased to call him away, his poor soul should have no distractions on the journey. That was sure to be a serious expedition in any case, and one did not want to be weighed down with unportable baggage!

The suave voice ran on, with the echo of gentle laughter here and there; the wise, untroubled eyes seemed to see all the sick man's inner perturbations, and smiled their promise of comradeship and help; and, as the words ceased, the brotherly hand laid itself on the Professor's hot fingers with a strong, beneficent clasp that seemed to say, "If temptation still lingers near, we will overcome it together."

The sick man gazed at his comforter in ever-increasing wonder. Was it true, then, that very holy persons could see into the minds of others; needed no words to tell them what was passing there? Ah no, he was growing fanciful; the Cardinal was no doubt talking academically, in amiable generalities, like any polished man of the world. How could he dream of the specters of fear and remorse which had crowded round Carlo Bianchi in that horrible, submerged crypt? Before the final collapse had robbed him of consciousness, every dream of the past three months had been renounced, with vows, on condition of being



brought out alive, had been renounced again, with frenzied persistence, when death loomed near and rescue failed. No allurements on earth should tempt him to go back on his promises, to find himself in corporal peril and mortal sin again at one and the same time. He had pondered how to begin a confidence which was necessary to the instant clearing up of his account towards Giannella, for he needed help, and there was no one, except his host, whom he could entrust with a delicate commission.

"How well your Eminence understands a scholar's mind," he said at last. "How true it is that Science, like Sara, is a jealous mistress, and will have the house to herself. Poor earthly matters are turned out, homeless Hagars and Ishmaels, to take their chance, uncared for and forgotten."

The Cardinal looked amused. It was funny to have Scripture quoted at him by a layman. The Professor continued more gravely, "Since your Eminence is so very kind, there is a small matter which occurred to me as I was lying here. But I hesitate to trouble you with such trifles."

"Nothing which can conduce to your comfort is a trifle, my dear friend," the Cardinal replied, "and it would rejoice me to have to take any trouble for you, but I fear you will not favor me so greatly. Is the matter connected with your household? Your servant and the Signorina Brockmann were here this morning, inquiring anxiously for your respected health. The doctor satisfied them on that point, but would not permit you to be disturbed."



"I am very much obliged to him," exclaimed Bianchi. "I mean, I should prefer to see them later — when this little affair is regulated. The truth is — it had passed from my mind — but there is some money," he brought out the word with a half-impenitent sigh, "and also papers, which should have been put into Giannella's hands in a week or two — when she comes of age. Perhaps, considering all things, she had better take them over — and — have the business explained to her now. It will save time — and — would it be possible for your Eminence to send a person of confidence to my apartment, with this key?" He fumbled nervously under his pillow, where Domenico had bestowed the contents of his pockets the night before, and drew out a rusty key. "The secretary by the window, in my study — second shelf on the left hand — a parcel tied up with a red string. If I could have it brought to me? But I am ashamed of giving so much trouble."

"My chaplain will fetch it himself, at once," the Cardinal assured him; "he is most careful and trustworthy. If you will kindly touch that bell at your side?"

The summons was quickly answered and Don Ignazio received his orders and departed to carry them out. "And now, amico," said the Cardinal, leaning back in his chair, and folding his fingers tip to tip while he looked into the Professor's face with a pleasant light of satisfaction on his own, "if you are not too tired to bear a little more conversation, I have a story to tell you, a love story. Figure to your-



self how badly I shall tell it. But it concerns two good young people, your Giannella and a very respectable young man. And though love stories are nearly as far from your province as from mine, I think this one will interest you. Shall I go on?"

The Professor turned a shade paler and his face twitched slightly, but he begged the Eminenza to proceed.

So the Cardinal, in few and direct words, gave him the history of the little romance, described Goffi's circumstances and the disinterested affection which he appeared to entertain for the girl, ignored altogether the fact of the Professor's own intentions regarding her, and the support so cunningly obtained thereto from the Princess, and wound up by drawing an alluring picture of Giannella's old protector and friend received as the honored and beloved guest in the cheerful household, where, as age approached, he would find that atmosphere of intimacy and affection which he had never had time to create for himself. There would be young voices, fresh interests, little children to take on his knee, the home, in fact, for which the Italian has no name and has never needed one but which he understands and cherishes with reverent care. The Churchman, who had put all family joys aside to follow the strict counsels of perfection, described these things with such tenderness and charm that some secret chord in his hearer's heart was touched. Bianchi turned away his face, but put out his hand timidly in search of his friend's. The mute appeal was instantly met, and this time the



Professor's fingers clung almost convulsively to those of Paolo Cestaldini, who laid his other hand over them and sat thus for awhile, letting the little spring of long-foregone emotion have its way in silence in the other's heart.

At last Bianchi spoke, low and huskily. "Eminenza, there was a young man once, who put his youth behind him, not as you did, for the love of God, but for ambition, desire of distinction, the saving of money, for leisure to study, study, study, undisturbed by the claims of the heart, of the family. And those things which were meant to be his servants became his masters, and used his strength, his eyesight, his very life, and gave him uncertain payments, sometimes generous, sometimes cruel and bitter. But the years had passed and there was nothing else. And he cheated himself into believing that he desired nothing else. But he was always a little hungry, in his soul, for Religion, finding he did not need her, had left him to himself. Then, when he was growing old, came two temptations, a young girl in whom he began to take pleasure and comfort, and money, which had always appeared to him a very desirable thing. A little silence, a little harmless deception — and both, he thought could be his. So he snatched at them — and fell, in intention he fell, almost in deed." Here Bianchi turned his head and gazed at the Cardinal very sadly through his spectacles. "Eminenza, how can he regain his self-respect? How can he come and go in such a home as you describe, when, but for a terrible and sudden warning, he would have



stolen the girl, and her fortune too, for his own solitary impoverished self? Dove mai? Poveraccio, he can never look her or her husband in the face — and they can never see him without remembering and detesting his disloyalty.”

“If I knew that man of whom you speak,” the Cardinal replied gravely, “I would say to him, ‘Amico mio, even for sins of intention some chastisement is due, and perhaps you might put what you call the loss of self-respect against that account, though in truth the loss you deplore seems more like the loss of self-confidence. That, to poor human nature, is like cutting off the finest branch of the tree, but on the scar may be grafted two sweet and healing fruits, humanity and vigilance. But for this shock who knows but that self-confidence might have led you even more helplessly astray in time to come? Therefore, friend, you are not poorer, but richer, by the deprivation.’ And as for the other point, that of how the persons concerned may regard him, I would tell that man that very happy people have no time to remember and detest. There is no room for resentment in hearts that are full of joy and affection. A kind word, a pleasant look, a little service rendered — and these good souls say to themselves, ‘Behold, it was all a mistake! How stupid we were to think he wished us ill. Why, here is a good true friend — how could we ever have believed him an enemy?’ And should the poor man feel the need of making some reparation, how many opportunities he will have of showing kindness, of giving wise advice, of recon-



ciling those small differences which must arise from time to time even in the most united families! If he ever really meditated an injury, he will convert it into a thousand benefits which the recipients will bless him for, never dreaming that he owes them anything, that he is paying them a debt. Oh, Professor mio, only a priest knows what miracles of kindness and self-sacrifice self-accusation can bring forth. Blessed are those who weep over their own faults! Their tears are turned to sunshine for others ere they fall."

The sun had long set, the swift night had darkened the room, and the Cardinal could not see his friend's face. His good-night blessing was answered in an almost inaudible whisper, but, as he passed out, something like a sob fell on his ear. The Professor's heart had come to life at last.



## CHAPTER XXVI

**I**T was the first Sunday in October, the jewel day of the Roman year. Tiny clouds, mere flecks of transparent silver, chased each other across the pale sapphire of the sky; a delicate breeze was dancing up from the sea; the campagna looked like a mantle of gold fretted at the rim with a crest of melting amethyst, where the Albans and the Sabines, Soracte and the Cimmerian hills, lifted their strong yet tender outlines to round the horizon in. The swallows, dainty sybarites who take their pleasures seriously, were marshaling their airy forces for migration, the wise old veterans, who have made the journey for many an autumn, teaching the neophytes the secret of long flight, shepherding them into their places in the V-shaped squadrons where the strongest winged of the silver-breasted patriarchs cleaves the air like a sentient arrow head, taking advantage of every current that sets in the chosen direction, sailing gently on with it where it helps, and the flock may sweep forward without a stroke, yet rising with instant decision at the precise distance from the ground where flight would lose its impetus. Perfect mathematicians, tracing their angles on viewless maps — wary old commanders husbanding their followers' strength to the last moment, seconded by a score of experienced officers who accompany and follow the



flock, herd in the would-be stragglers, scold the lazy, encourage the weak, place the youngest of all in the center of the batallion so that the encounter with a contrary breeze may be broken for them and the untried wings helped by the fanning of stronger pinions behind — who that has watched the mobilizing of the swallows' army during the three weeks of the autumn, when the Staff consults on the housetops and sends its drill sergeants out to teach the recruits their business and train them into condition for miracles of enduring flight — who that has watched this would ever dare to arrogate the splendors of intelligence to mankind alone? Were one race on this earth as dutiful to racial obligations, as perfect in obedience, in endurance, in family discipline and military instinct as the swallow — that race would rule the world.

“Rondinella, pellegrina,” Giannella murmured as she watched the swallows from her workroom window on that Sunday morning, “I envy you no longer. Fra Tommaso's pigeons are happier than you. One abiding home for them, one home for me. And God grant I may never have to leave it. Si, Mariuccia, I am ready.”

Yes, she was ready for her marriage. Robed in silk of the October heaven's own blue even as Rinaldo had dreamed of her, with a white veil over the golden hair that had so long been shaded by the black, a little string of pearls round her soft neck, white prayer-book and white rosary in the still whiter hands — a flush of gay carnation on the cheek, the



happiness of morning in her innocent eyes — Giannella was ready for her marriage. The dark days were over; the sentinels of sorrow and privation that had so long guarded her narrow path had shed their somber armor now, and stood revealed, bright spirits of love and trust, bidding her pass forward to the sunny glades beyond.

As Mariuccia entered, Giannella came and kissed her old friend tenderly and then stood back to admire her splendid appearance. The treasured costume had come out of the goatskin trunk at last; here was the full skirt of flowered silk, the scarlet corselet and sleeves, the gold trimmings, the lace shawl and apron — creamy with the kiss of Time. But Time seemed to have forgiven Mariuccia a score of years this morning; the erect old figure was almost supple in its buoyancy, there was color in her cheeks, a sparkle in her eyes, her head was held high, as if to show off the fine fat pearls dangling from her ears. Her bosom heaved with pride under a long heavy string of new red coral — and her shoes creaked excruciatingly as she moved, for in the triumph of her heart she had commanded that brigand of a shoemaker to put a double “scrocchio” into each solid hole. Cipicchia! If people turned their heads to look at her to-day, all the better for them!

Giannella’s admiration found no time for expression, for behind Mariuccia appeared another figure, that of the Professor, solemnly resplendent in full evening dress, white tie and white gloves. He seemed happy too this October morning, and as he came



forward to present Giannella with an enormous bouquet of white camellias, his eyes shone cheerfully behind a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles given to him by Rinaldo and henceforth to be kept for great occasions. There was nothing in his look or manner to suggest regrets, and if he had had to struggle with depression and remorse, he had evidently bested his enemies and turned them into peaceful denizens of the house of his soul. The Cardinal, on the plausible pretext of Signor Bianchi's illness, had himself seen to the transfer of Giannella's property into her own keeping; and since the hour he had bidden his friend good-night in the summer dusk, no word or look of those around him had reminded the Professor of his fault. De Sanctis had been gently put aside by the prelate when he offered to draw up the marriage contract. "No, Guglielmo mio," said Carlo Bianchi's friend, "we will employ someone else. You are too intimate with all the parties. You might have a moment's distraction and neglect an important point. That would never do."

The young lawyer was nettled. "The Eminenza is afraid my sharp tongue might disturb the general harmony," he ventured to remark. "But have I not promised silence as to all inconvenient facts? Surely I might be trusted to keep my word."

"Yes," the Cardinal said, "your tongue would keep silence, I am assured. But all the good will in the world will not banish that little demon of malice and mockery from your glance and tone. So we will not expose you to temptation. When all is over, the



demon will find no fun in making trouble, and then, if you wish, you can cultivate intimacy with the Signor Professore and the Goffis. Just now, my son, it is better for you to keep away from them."

So Bianchi had enjoyed a short space of carefully-guarded convalescence for body and mind. When he was able to leave his room he had had an ecstatic hour over the Greek head, which was temporarily reposing on a velvet cushion in the Cardinal's study. It was quite as beautiful as he had thought when he found it in the wet darkness of the crypt, and he had drawn much soothing and peace of spirit from the preparation of an article on it, which *The Archaeological Review* would carry to lovers of art all over the world. Yet he had not forgotten Paolo Cestaldini's little sermon on reparation, and various pretty gifts from him had been sent to the appartamento on the roof where the sposini were to begin life together.

Now he was to take the bride to the church, and it was with much stateliness that he offered her his arm and led her through the dark passage, through the green door which she had so often run to open for him, and down into the courtyard, where the carriage was waiting for them. Mariuccia, after taking one look at the fire and another at the collation on the dining-room table, hurried after them, thrusting the heavy doorkey into the long-unused pocket of the best dress. She laughed as she felt some hard objects there and discovered them to be pellicles of pitted sugar. "Confetti! They must have lain there since



Stefano's marriage, more than thirty years ago. Mamma mia, we do grow old!"

As the little party ascended the steps of the San Severino, Giannella trembling a little and looking indeed as lovely as the "youngest Madonna," Mariuccia pulled three large silver pieces from the corner of her new pocket handkerchief and presented them to the expectant beggars.

The habitués of the porch were fewer by two than in the old days; the parish epileptic had died suddenly and happily on the altar steps while attending Mass; the footless baby had grown — not up, but big, and he pattered about in great contentment on padded hands and knees; it was understood that he had pensioned off his shiftless parent and had a nice little home of his own. The blind man was truly blind now, and the privileged cripple by the door was absent on rainy days, owing to rheumatism, but on a fine Sunday morning he still raised the leather curtain with his old grace. The blessings that followed the bride and her companions were loud and long, and the many churchgoers, hurrying to Mass before rushing out to the country for the day, stood smilingly aside to let the wedding party pass in.

Just within the doorway the bridegroom was waiting with a company of his friends, all in evening dress and wearing flowers in their buttonholes. Peppino, bubbling over with whispered fun, was trying to calm Rinaldo, who, between discomfort in the unaccustomed costume, tight white gloves which would not fasten properly, and doubt as to which of his



pockets contained the ring and which the gold and silver coins he must produce when the priest should bid him endow Giannella with all his worldly goods, had worked himself up to a condition allied to frenzy. The sight of Giannella restored him to some command of himself, and by the time they were kneeling together before the altar of the Addolorata he could forget earthly preoccupations, listen to the padre's exhortations on the duties of the married state, and pray with true and humble faith never to fail in love and honor to his dear beautiful bride.

They came out when it was all over with the happiest light on their faces, and though their hearts were only conscious of each other they paused to return the kind wishes of their friends. Among these was Fra Tommaso, beaming with satisfied benevolence. Rinaldo drew him aside and slipped a gold piece into his hand. "Fra Tommaso mio," he said, with some show of contrition, "I have a sad confidence to make to you, and since this is a festal day, please promise me your pardon."

"You do not look very sorry about it, signorino," replied the old man. "What are you giving me gold for. Here, take it back. You owe me nothing."

"Oh yes, I do," said Rinaldo. "I have several times occupied your loggia and paid nothing for it."

"My loggia?" exclaimed the sacristan, "how could you have done that?"

"I got there — from mine," was the reply, "and when I found that I could see from there into my fidanzata's window, well, I came again. I even spoke



to her from there. Was not that a dreadful sin? But you must forgive me, and I will give you another beautiful pigeon, my Themistocles, who sometimes consented to carry a bit of a love letter. You will not give him that exercise, and he will grow fat and rejoice your heart with his funny tricks."

"Themistocles? He wear a silver collar? He carried your love letters to the Biondina? Oh, God be praised. You have lifted a weight from my soul." And Fra Tommaso clasped his hands and raised thankful eyes to heaven.

"What do you mean? Explain!" cried Rinaldo, puzzled beyond expression.

"No," said Fra Tommaso, "I shall not tell you. But you cost me my dinner one day, O assassin, and many tears. Bad boy," and he laughed happily, "I will keep the money now and spend it in Masses for the Holy Souls whom I have teased with most unnecessary prayers. There run along to your sposina, and do not send me that evil bird—he would finish in my soup."

Peppino was beckoning and Rinaldo, hurried away, leaving the problem unsolved. In five minutes he had forgotten all about it, for the Cardinal had sent the chaplain down to say that he wished to see the sposini and give them his blessing. The bridegroom's supporters paused on the threshold of the prelate's apartment, but the chaplain drove them all in and the Cardinal, after greeting Rinaldo and Giannela, had a cheery word for everyone, and especially for Peppino, whom he had not had a chance to thank



for his share in the memorable rescue, and whose bright face and roguish smile delighted his heart. For his friend Bianchi he had the warmest of welcomes, a little allusion to their common interests, a remark about their last interview, to show all concerned, in the most delicate way, that the Professor was still his honored friend.

Then he had some gifts to distribute; for "Botti's Mariuccia" a rosary blessed by the Pope and a sprig of olive from Gethsemane, gifts which he knew would be most precious to the unlearned, faithful heart, and she wept for joy on receiving them and on finding that her feudal lord remembered her name. When the chaplain began to lead the visitors away to refresh them with coffee and sweetmeats, the Cardinal called Rinaldo and Giannella to his side. Opening a drawer in the table, he took out a small case and gave it to Giannella, saying that his sister had sent it for her, with all good wishes for her happiness. Within lay a beautiful miniature of Guido Reni's *Addolorata* and a few words in the Princess's own handwriting, pious felicitations, through which glowed something quite warm and kindly, and the request with which Teresa Santafede's epistles always closed, "Pray for me."

Giannella was touched and delighted. Only one good friend had been silent on this happy day, dear Signora Dati "of good memery," but Giannella had sent her a little message when she said her prayers that morning. Now, now that all was duly done and ended, her thoughts found answer in Rinaldo's eyes. "Andiamoci? Shall we go together, we two



who are one, shall we go into our garden of happiness?"

Ah, there were a few things to be seen to first. Mariuccia's collation had to be enjoyed. The Professor, charmed with the new sensation of playing host to a gay young party, proposed healths; Sora Amalia, mindful of future patronage, climbed the stairs with an armful of flowers and a basket of fresh eggs, and was brought in and made to take part in the feast. Then Peppino, by some magic, produced Rinaldo's new morning suit and effected for him a grateful transformation in the Professor's bedroom. Giannella's finery was covered with a crape shawl, for it would be bad luck for a bride to change her dress before she left her old home. Then the two were seen downstairs by all the boys, and packed into the carriage waiting to take them to Albano for a week's honeymoon, which was to include the joy of a visit to Mamma Candida and the ever-dear Teresina and Annetta.

"Madonna mia," exclaimed Giannella as the carriage passed out of the portone and Rinaldo, curiously shy now, drew her hand into his, "who can support so much happiness?"

Don Onorato, who had learned trouble and wisdom in the last three years, saw them pass. The story had all been told him by the maestro di casa. "Beati loro!" he sighed, "I am glad that poor little girl has had some good luck at last. I wonder if happiness will ever climb the grand staircase?"

On the fourth landing of the third staircase the



door was still open. Mariuccia listened till the last young footstep had died away, then she turned back into the passage and found herself face to face with the Professor. He looked at her sadly. "Well, Mariuccia," he said, "I suppose you will want to go over to the appartamento at once, so as to have all things ready when the sposini come back? Of course, there is much to do — I quite understand, and doubtless that young woman you have engaged for me will be satisfactory. Still — if you could wait — for a day or two longer —" He looked at her wistfully.

Mariuccia laughed, but the laugh was a little shaky, "A day or two longer?" she repeated, as she untied her lace apron and began to fold it up. "Another twenty years, if God wills. Did you think I was going to leave this quiet house and that noble kitchen to have my head worried off my shoulders by two children who will laugh and chatter all day and never remember the hours of their meals till they are hungry? No, no, padroncino mio. The young woman is for them, she will laugh and chatter with them — youth with youth. There will be three babies — till the Madonna sends them a fourth. As for you and me, we stay together. Do you figure to yourself that I would trust you, and your linen, and your digestion — to a stranger? Dove mai? What an idea! Come take off those beautiful clothes that I may put them away. Your others are all ready on the bed in there. You will not want any dinner now, after all those 'gingilli' and sweet wines — but this evening you



shall have — let me see — a fritto dorato — but of those! Eh, padroncino mio? It will be like old times, just you and me!”

THE END











Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.  
Neutralizing Agent: Magnesium Oxide  
Treatment Date:

SEP

1996



**BOOKKEEPER**

PRESERVATION TECHNOLOGIES, INC.

111 Thomson Park Drive  
Cranberry Twp., PA 16066

23







**LIBRARY OF CONGRESS**



00014791383

